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**Consuming Fictions:
Trauma and Ideology in Irish Famine Literature**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for _____
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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Possessing an Impossible History

William Carleton's forgotten Irish Famine novel *The Squanders of Castle Squander* (1851) reaches one of its many climaxes as the narrator witnesses a graveyard full of emaciated peasant corpses being devoured by feral dogs. We observe a "wolfish hound, with a human head between his paws, on the features of which he [makes] his meal" (2:139). Reacting to the horror of Famine, Carleton's voice – which enters the novel as an intrusive omniscient narrator – discards the fictional plot, interpreting Ireland's troubled history for the reader. At the conclusion of the graveyard scene, the omniscient narrator interrupts the narrative to claim that "*all these frightful pictures were facts of that day, and were witnessed by thousands!*" (2:139). In such narrative interventions, Carleton's omniscient narrator interjects italicized comments, inter-textual citing, and didactic instructions, all of which eventually consume the narrative, relegating plot to the margins. Any sense that we are reading a normative novel fades as we watch an Irish author disregard his fictional medium and interpret the Famine's historical impact for several hundred pages.

Anthony Trollope's 1859 novel *Castle Richmond* similarly endeavors to interpret the Famine, though to drastically different ends. His narrator boldly declares that "the destruction of the potato was the work of God." He then attempts to rectify this seemingly incongruous assertion by claiming the disaster is an "exhibition of His mercy" (71). According to *Castle Richmond*'s imperial narrator, God sends the Famine – identified as a harbinger of progress – to remedy Ireland's social ills and demonstrate the efficacy of English governing systems. As the novel's omniscient narrator describes the lives of landlords during the Famine, we are continually reminded that this is God's disaster, God's answer to the vexed "Irish Question."

Though *The Squanders of Castle Squander* and *Castle Richmond* are strikingly divergent in ideological message, narrative structure, and emotional impact, both rupture structurally and thematically whenever they attempt to incorporate the Famine into partisan interpretations. Edward Said observes that for “written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation” (21). The Famine will never become a “delivered presence” through novelization, so Carleton and Trollope attempt to incorporate the disaster into interpretive paradigms, re-presenting it as a contained historical event. Yet the Famine remains an elusive subject, defying their attempts to tame it through fictional “representation.” In order to incorporate a trauma as pervasive as the Famine into the novelistic medium – to transform it from an event into a story – Carleton and Trollope are forced to make decisions that compromise their claims to depict the disaster accurately. As no representation will convey the enormity of the Famine, both authors must mold it into narrative, a process that requires innumerable omissions, and inherently simplifies the historical event. Invoking these two novels as examples of the genre, my essay explores the manner in which trauma and ideology shape narratives Famine witnesses invoke to represent the disaster.

Offering a crucial insight into the narration of devastating historical and/or personal events, trauma theory has recently been applied to literature of the Indian Mutiny of 1847, the Holocaust, and sexual abuse.¹ Somewhat surprisingly, the paradigm has never been invoked as a framework for understanding literature of the Great Irish Famine (1845-50). In August 1845, as the fungus *Phytophthora infestans* began destroying the Irish potato crop,

¹ Christopher Herbert's *War of No Pity* studies English literature in the wake of the Indian Mutiny of 1847, which questioned the justifications of imperialism. In *The Belated Witness*, Michael Levine examines Holocaust literature as it struggles to convey unspeakable experiences. Deborah Horvitz's *Literary Trauma* addresses the personal and cultural traumas which become internalized in fiction of North American women.

over one half of the country relied on the vegetable as their primary source of food (O'Grada 3).² Though estimates vary, reasonable calculations assert that “the population [fell] by a quarter, with over a million people dead from hunger and famine-related diseases, well over half a million fled to Britain, and over a million [emigrating]” (Van de Camp 1). When the blight finally ended in 1849 and potato crops began to return sustainable yields, Ireland still suffered several years of epidemics and high emigration. In under a decade, the island was transformed.

Carleton and Trollope, both witnesses of that devastating transformation, write novels haunted by trauma. As an Englishman, Trollope enjoyed a far greater distance from the suffering than Carleton; nonetheless, both their novels attempt to deflect but ultimately internalize symptoms of trauma. Cathy Caruth, whose contributions have helped establish the emerging field of literary trauma theory, observes that catastrophic events elicit a response taking “the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event ... and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event” (4). Memories of the Famine elicited a traumatic response from Carleton and Trollope, just as they tortured Irish popular memory for decades. Carleton's *The Squanders of Castle Squander* enacts “repeated, intrusive hallucinations” in its structural confusion and multiple narrators. Trollope's *Castle Richmond*, with several exceptions, avoids traumatic “stimuli,” thereby forcing the reader to envision a future beyond the Famine. Though their degrees of destabilization differ, both novels are methodologically and thematically molded by trauma.

² What we remember as the Great Famine was by no means the first Irish experience with endemic hunger: “crop failures had occurred periodically in Ireland in 1740, 1766, 1782-4, 1795-6, 1800-1, 1816-17 and 1822” (Kinealy 32). Hunger was so common in Ireland that when “Bishop Doyle was asked, in 1832, what was the condition of the population in the west of Ireland, he replied ‘that which it has always been – they are famishing as usual’” (Van de Kamp 2). The Great Famine, however, was unprecedented in both its scope and duration.

As we witness Trollope elide scenes of recalled devastation and Carleton lose control of his narrative, we encounter evidence of what Caruth would describe as victims of severe trauma carrying “an impossible history with them,” becoming “themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (5). Eyewitness Famine fiction is a struggle over the possession of “an impossible history.” Attempting to transform the Famine from a traumatic historical event into a digestible, contained piece of knowledge, both authors rely upon ideology.³ Providing a set of cultural assumptions and justifications, ideology grants Trollope and Carleton ready interpretations that they use in the attempt to control an uncontrollable subject. Trollope’s identification of the disaster as a harbinger of progress and Carleton’s assault on authority draw upon and reinforce their authors’ worldviews; their interpretive strategies inherently politicize the disaster. Famine fiction attempts to harness the disaster’s emotional potency for political gain, at stake is control over the narrative of Ireland’s most transformative historical moment. If either the English or the Irish can dominate the interpretation popularly assigned to the Famine, they will have justified their right to rule. In the wake of the Famine, historian R. F. Foster argues, it became apparent that British government had “failed to solve the problems of Ireland ... even hard-line Liberals had to concede that the Famine years and ensuing changes raised questions about the administration of Irish affairs” (205). The narratives English and Irish use to explain the Famine implicitly contend that their group should control the “administration of Irish affairs.” An irresponsive colonial government necessitates independence; a tortured step

³ Historical interpretations of the Famine have always been appropriated by ideology. Irish nationalist writer John Mitchel’s claim that “the Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight [but] the English created the famine” serves as one early example of interpreting the disaster pragmatically for political gain (Van de Camp 11). No less prevalent in the years after the Famine was the view expressed by William Wilde (father of Oscar Wilde), that “the most strenuous efforts which human sagacity, ingenuity, and foresight could at the time devise were put into requisition” by the government (O’Grada 3-4). Every attempt to explain the Famine is made through a partisan lens. Using the same facts, Irish nationalists generally saw an attempted genocide, the English an ugly step on the path of progress

towards modernity by an infantile country requires continued enlightened stewardship. Any attempt to graft an interpretation onto the Famine amounts to an effort to possess its “impossible history” in the name of an ideological faction.

In the ultimate irony of Famine literature, it is the trauma of history which possesses both Carleton and Trollope; both authors' efforts to enclose the Famine within narrative are continually thwarted by the textual anarchy that accompanies any moment in which the disaster comes into focus. As narrative approaches scenes of trauma, the novels lose cohesion. Failing to contain the Famine, ideology is unmasked as an enabling fiction, providing immediate but imperfect explanations for the disaster. Traumatic moments expose partisan interpretations as simplifying mechanisms, unfit to the task of containing reality. Striving for omniscience, ideology emerges as a transparently subjective narrative, and the realization results in structural confusion throughout *The Squanders of Castle Squander* and *Castle Richmond*. Traumatic memories subvert any attempt to contain the Famine within a politicized interpretation. In Caruth's words, they expose Trollope and Carleton as “symptom[s] of a history that they cannot entirely possess.”

Straining to contain a subject that defies narration, both *The Squanders of Castle Squander* and *Castle Richmond* navigate a perilous spectrum between order and chaos. *Castle Richmond*, which manages to uphold a surface-level semblance of order, does so by narrating the Famine through historical generalities, rather than accessing emotional scenes of suffering. This approach employs master-narratives such as progress, religion, and imperialism to explain the disaster. Whenever the narrative focuses upon the human ramifications of the Famine, however, Trollope unleashes images and energies that cannot be contained within his framework for interpreting the disaster because they belie the notion that

progress drives humanity forward. At the opposite end of the spectrum is William Carleton's *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, which concentrates instead on the horrific details of the Famine and questions authority-generating narratives of imperialism and organized religion. The second half of his novel, a nearly plot-less collection of inter-textual sources and argument from a new narrator, resembles a postmodern collage. The Famine's traumatic legacy destabilizes narrative itself, resulting in a proliferation of voices vainly struggling to contain the disaster within an interpretative framework.

Toward the conclusion of the novel, *Castle Richmond*'s narrator explains the Famine in terminology ludicrously distanced from our modern sensibilities:

But if one did in truth write a tale of the [Famine], after that it would behoove the author to write a tale of the pestilence; and then another, a tale of the exodus. These three wonderful events, following each other, were the blessings coming from Omniscience and Omnipotence by which the black clouds were driven from the Irish firmament. If one through it all could have dared to hope, and have had from the first that wisdom which has learned to acknowledge that His mercy endureth for ever! And then the same author going on with his series would give in his last set, Ireland in her prosperity. (Trollope 535)

The narrator cheerily describes the “three wonderful events” that – though they result in the death of at least a million peasants – lead to “Ireland in her prosperity.” The Divine, by this argument, has depopulated the “Irish firmament,” leaving it ready to embrace an Anglicized socio-economic system. Throughout descriptions such as these, shades of trauma inhabit the margins, rising unbidden to puncture the novel's ideological message. Scenes of peasant misery, which emerge twice in the novel, subvert the interpretation assigned to the Famine by the narrator.

Where *Castle Richmond*'s narrator sees beacons of hope in the Famine, Carleton's authorial voice sees “a three headed monster:”

We must now direct the attention of our readers to one of the most fearful and appalling pictures of national calamity and horror that ever the eye of man rested on, or the heart of man conceived. The calamity we allude to was a three-headed monster, which in this shape became the *Apollyon* or destroyer of at least a million and a quarter of people. The first head was Extermination by the landlords, the second, Famine, and the third, Pestilence; all working together and decimating the wretched population by a combined and uniform destruction. These three causes reacted upon each other with a most deadly and destructive reciprocity. We question if there is anything in the historical records of civilized life so utterly heartless and inhuman as the system of extermination or eviction, which spread such wide and helpless desolation over the country. (*Squanders* 2:212)

Watching the Famine “[decimate] the wretched population” of his native island, Carleton wonders whether anything “in the historical records of civilized life” equals the devastation of this disaster. The enormity of the question leads Carleton to identify Cerberus, the mythological “three-headed” dog who guards Hades, and Apollyon, lord of the City of Destruction in *The Pilgrims Progress*, as emblems of the Famine. Invoking two of the most hideous mythic creatures that would have been familiar to his audience, Carleton configures the Famine as a subject that will never submit to human authority. Just as Greek mythology and Bunyan’s allegory concern threats beyond typical human experience, Carleton’s Famine is apocalyptic. Unable to confront the Famine without imploding, his novel eventually collapses while struggling to recount the disaster.

Though they approach the subject through divergent academic frameworks, modern interpretations of this literature are united by one conviction: ideology shapes Famine fiction. The germinal work in the field, Christopher Morash’s 1995 monograph *Writing the Irish Famine*, employs a Marxist interpretative framework to examine how the Famine affected English bourgeois conceptions of progress and class. Terry Eagleton’s *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* examines moments of “repression or evasion” within the Irish and English

canon (12).⁴ Melissa Fegan, in *Literature and the Irish Famine: 1845-1919*, counters Eagleton's complaint that "there are a handful of novels and a body of poems" on the Irish Famine, "but few truly distinguished works" (Eagleton 13). Fegan recovers manifestations of Famine literature in novels, poems, historical tracts, contemporary newspapers, and travelers' accounts. Perhaps the most accomplished contemporary study of Famine literature is Margaret Kelleher's *The Feminization of Famine*, where she examines the alarming propensity with which narratives of Famine exploit women, casting them as spectacles of starvation. I depart from modern critical interpretations in my choice of primary texts, use of narrative theory, analysis of ideology, and, above all else, in positing that trauma plays the vital role in shaping first generation Famine narratives. *Castle Richmond* and *The Squanders of Castle Squander* display symptoms of trauma in their inability to incorporate the Famine into narrative memory.

This essay examines novelistic attempts to possess the history of the Famine, all of which are foiled by embodiments of traumatic memory, resulting in structural and ideological chaos. My first two chapters examine the methods by which both authors attempt to fit the Famine into an ideological interpretation: Trollope through master-narratives of progress, Carleton through an overt authorial voice, which struggles to make sense of the disaster. In the second half of this paper, I examine the failure of those attempts. Trollope's narrator subtly loses ideological authority over his narrative. Whenever he details the human ramifications of Famine, voices and meanings surface that force us to question his narrative legitimacy. Carleton, on the other hand, fails spectacularly in his effort to provide a coherent interpretation of the Famine. His novel descends into structural disarray, serving as a

⁴ As Eagleton's work focuses upon literature written several generations after the Famine, it connects peripherally to a study of eyewitness Famine fiction.

stunning embodiment of traumatic memory. Any attempt to graft definitive meaning onto a trauma as pervasive as the Famine is an effort to contain the uncontainable.

Hope Despite Hunger

Castle Richmond evades the Famine. When the narrator does turn his attention to the disaster, he does so in an historical voice, eliding emotional depictions of human suffering. Trollope relies upon what Christopher Herbert, in his study of the Indian Mutiny's traumatic impact upon English consciousness, has labeled the "broadly diffused Victorian ideology of reform, progress, improvement, and 'civilization'" (27). The Famine is addressed in generalities, and explained through simplifying master-narratives of "progress, improvement, and 'civilization.'" Allowing Trollope to repress his memories of the disaster, the tactic forces the narrative, with two notable exceptions, to remain fixated on the romantic plot instead of human suffering.

Religion and imperialism offer Trollope the most coherent and accessible narratives through which to distance himself from the Famine while interpreting it. On a surface level, the novel offers fictional support to Trollope's 1849-50 *Examiner* letters, which argued that the English were being unduly chastised for their leadership during the Famine. Distancing itself from the Irish and demonstrating the English capacity for leadership, *Castle Richmond* uses the Famine as evidence for the merits of Union. In order to do so, Trollope only infrequently includes details of suffering; instead, the Famine is usually explained in general terms, and made to fit within narratives of religion and imperialism. These master-narratives, I argue, possess an ability to simplify history, preserve the status quo, and inspire some measure of hope in the face of the Famine. Later in the essay, however, I return to moments in which master-narratives cease functioning; these are the traumatic moments in the novel, accessing a past Trollope struggles to keep at arm's length.

Anthony Trollope left England for Ireland in 1841 in search of a second chance. He had suffered an unhappy childhood, and faced miserable career prospects at home. The time he spent working as a surveyor for the British postal service in Ireland was Trollope's first major stroke of luck. Widely respected for his competency and beginning to be acknowledged as a notable novelist, Trollope permanently left Ireland in 1860 after having been forged anew by the colonial experience. *Castle Richmond*, written "on the eve of his departure from Ireland in 1860," was his farewell description of the island, its people, its rulers, and its haunting disaster (Kelleher, *Feminization* 39). His novel thus sounds many contradictory notes: triumphalism with regard to English character, anxiety over being perceived as Irish throughout England, sympathy for the peasantry, and faith in the status quo. Set in southwest Ireland during the height of national starvation, *Castle Richmond* struggles to reconcile Trollope's political convictions, his ambivalent feelings toward the peoples of Ireland, and the Famine.

The ambivalence toward Ireland later evident in *Castle Richmond* was not on display in his first contribution to Famine historiography. Between 1849 and 1850, as the Famine was ending but sicknesses lingered, Trollope wrote six letters to *The Examiner*, a liberal London newspaper. In them, he attempts to defend the English government, castigate the media for exaggerating the extent of the disaster, and entice Englishmen to settle in Ireland. He spiritedly condemns Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborn's portrayals of the Famine in his letters of around the same period to *The Times*. Trollope lampoons "the 'fearfully graphic' and 'awfully familiar' pictures of famine and plague given by Osborne and 'by almost every class of people able to narrate what they have seen'" (Kelleher, *Feminization* 42). His alternate account emphasizes the successful actions taken by the English government to

alleviate suffering. In the first letter, Trollope sets forth his thesis: "Government has never yet got credit for the good their measure did" ("Examiner" 2901). Attempting to validate the English and discredit Irish nationalistic accounts of the Famine forces Trollope to make claims that appear incorrect in hindsight. For instance, he argues that the poor died in "hundreds," not "thousands" ("Examiner" 2901). Using the letters to detail which popular descriptions of the Famine are exaggerations and defend relief efforts, Trollope emerges "as the mouthpiece of government policy" (Fegan 121).

The letters do not merely justify the actions taken by the English government, but also provide a strenuous defense of British imperialism more generally. In his sixth letter to *The Examiner*, Trollope claims that the Irish "are a passive, long-suffering people personally indifferent to those principles to which the English attach so much importance; they are on that account more inclined to follow implicitly the guidance of a master, and to submit in all things to his command" ("Examiner" 2906). It goes almost without saying that Trollope assumes an Englishman is the natural "master" to whom the Irish are "inclined to follow implicitly." Later in the letter, his views on imperialism become yet more apparent:

That Ireland is now peaceful no one can doubt; it is only to be feared that she may become apathetic. The fever has subsided, but the doctor must take care that the patient does not cling to his bed till he dies of inanition. I fear that the prevailing feeling among Irishmen is, that there is no longer any hope; that an easy death is a good thing; and that toil and trouble are useless, as ruin and desolation are imminent. To combat this feeling should be the effort of every friend of Ireland; to encourage the industry, the hitherto feeble industry of the country; to do battle against habitual sloth, and almost habitual despair; to awake a manly feeling of inward confidence and a reliance on the justice of Heaven, should now be the work of Government, of Parliament, and of every individual who has an interest in the country. The man who takes a farm in Ireland and lives on it is Ireland's best friend. ("Examiner" 2906)

Imagining the English as "doctors" sent to cure the potentially "apathetic" Irish, Trollope implicitly argues that Ireland cannot sustain itself without English stewardship. Mary Jean

Corbett convincingly argues that though Trollope “never precisely identifies who will compose this ‘new landed propriety,’” we should nonetheless assume “that he envisioned something like a revived system of colonial plantation in post-Famine Ireland, which would draw clearer lines of class and culture between landed English capital and landless Irish labor” (135). Hence, any Englishman “who takes a farm in Ireland” is “Ireland’s best friend.” This pro-imperialist interpretation of the Famine persists; *Castle Richmond*’s narrator repeatedly recycles the arguments of the *Examiner Letters* in order to justify colonial ideology.

At several points throughout the novel – and in particular those that deal with topics related to the *Examiner* letters – Trollope identifies himself with the narrator. Immediately following Sir Thomas Fitzgerald’s death, the narrator temporarily interrupts the plot and focuses instead on describing the Famine across the country. Again, as in Trollope’s *Examiner* letters, the narrative comes to the defense of government: “It is in such emergencies as these that the watching and the wisdom of a government are necessary; and I shall always think – as I did think then – that the wisdom of its action and the wisdom of its abstinence from action were very good” (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 383). How are we to interpret that clause contained within dashes, “as I did think then?” What nineteenth-century omniscient narrator claims ownership over past political thoughts? The only viable explanation is that Trollope takes ownership of his *Examiner* letters while maintaining their rationale. In a chapter entitled “The Famine Year,” the narrator’s description of the initial effects of the Famine is augmented by a personal testimony:

I was in the country, travelling always through it, during the whole period, and I have to say – as I did say at the time with a voice not very audible – that in my opinion the measures of the government were prompt, wise, and beneficent; and I have to say also that the efforts of those who managed the

poor were, as a rule, unremitting, honest, impartial, and successful. (*Castle Richmond* 74)

Trollope “was in the country,” he was “travelling always through it” as a postal surveyor, and he said “at the time with a voice not very audible” that the “measures of the government were prompt, wise and beneficent.” It should, then, come as no surprise that “much of the novel’s material, such as its portrayal of the relief-schemes, its treatment of famine’s causes and consequences, echoes the *Examiner* letters and develops their refutation of Osborne’s analysis” (Kelleher, *Feminization* 41). The man who wrote the *Examiner* letters possesses the same political beliefs and interpretation of the Famine as the narrator of *Castle Richmond*. That Trollope seems to overtly take credit for the letters testifies that, at the very least, the political leanings of the narrator and author are compatible.

Several contemporary critics have argued that Trollope expects his readers to resist *Castle Richmond*’s narrator. Melissa Fegan, for instance, claims that “Trollope, freed from the dead weight of his own official stance, resurrects the polemic of the factual *Six Letters* in the fictional *Castle Richmond* in order to subvert it” (123). Matthew Sherrill, developing Fegan’s analysis in his Trollope Prize-winning essay on the novel, argues that “*Castle Richmond* reveals itself to be a cautionary tale about stories themselves, in which Trollope emphasizes the importance and necessity of history in a world where fiction often proves alluring, escapist, and ultimately unreal” (1). Their approach relies upon the reader’s expected response to the problematic incorporation of the Famine throughout the novel. *Castle Richmond* is, as Sherrill observes, undeniably concerned with the “importance and necessity of history.” I would depart from their analysis, however, in positing that Trollope works to shape historical memory *through* fiction, not to subvert fiction by problematically incorporating history into his novel. *Castle Richmond* is a continuation, not a refutation, of

his *Examiner* letters, periodically disrupted by trauma. Trollope attempts to “possess” the Famine – to incorporate it into narratives that legitimize it – but the traumatic nature of his relationship with the disaster subverts the attempt. The Famine, we see in scenes resisting incorporation, possesses Trollope; the disaster destabilizes his ability to form coherent narratives.

Nevertheless, Trollope’s narrator spends the vast majority of the novel attempting to contain the Famine. His efforts inevitably fail, but an examination of their textual effect allows us to see what, ideologically, is at stake in possessing the Famine’s traumatic history. The reliance upon religious and imperial narratives of progress can perhaps most accurately be explained by Trollope’s assertion in the first *Examiner* letter that most Famine portrayals leave “no hope left for the people who had been afflicted” (qtd. in Kelleher, *Feminization* 41). Encoding the disaster within master-narratives of progress, imperialism, and religion, Trollope attempts to bring “hope” into the literature of the Famine. That hope not only provides solace to traumatized Ireland, but also serves as a justification for England’s imperial endeavor.

Any attempt to place the Famine within a narrative of progress amounts to an attempt to tame its authority-subverting nature. It seems natural to assume that a traumatic catastrophe as endemic as the Famine would cause people to question authority structures. What competent government would allow one-quarter of the population to perish of hunger? How could a benevolent God permit the Famine? By positioning the Famine as a positive point within narratives of progress such as imperialism or religion, *Castle Richmond* redirects the political interpretation of the Famine. That endeavor is, however, fraught with difficulty. The Famine can only be tamed in this sense when its direct effects remain out of focus.

As an ideological tool, master-narratives impose homogeneity upon an historical event. Complexities and inconvenient details may be jettisoned so long as the narrative's trajectory remains fixed on its destination. *Castle Richmond* relies primarily upon concepts of providentialism and imperialism to place the Famine within a master-narrative of progress. The narrator accomplishes this objective through only tangentially and occasionally connecting the Famine to the plot. As modern readers, a sense of indignation on behalf of the deceased may incite us to resist Trollope's willingness to simplify the Famine and incorporate it within narratives of progress. Theodor Adorno, in the context of post-Holocaust art, believed that "no meaningful poetry could be written after Auschwitz because ... [it] automatically attempts to make sense of that event and, by that very act, insults and invalidates the ordeal of survivors" (Horvitz 19). Applying the same principle to Famine literature, many contemporary critics lambast Trollope's attempt "to make sense of that event." What we miss is the fact that narrating the Famine may serve as a palliative for eyewitnesses. Allowing survivors to incorporate their memories into a coherent and personal history helps them overcome trauma's possession of their memory. Coherently narrating the event is an attempt to tame that which seems untamable. Further, Trollope's incorporation of the disaster into narratives of progress may provide other survivors with that which was most sorely missed in the aftermath of the wreckage: hope. His attempt to possess the history of the Famine is not only an attempt to personally overcome its grip, but also to place that ideologically inflected legitimization strategy in the public sphere.

In examining Trollope's use of master-narratives in *Castle Richmond*, I rely upon advances made by Jean-François Lyotard in his seminal *The Post-Modern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*. Attempting to account for the state of knowledge (particularly

scientific knowledge) in contemporary society, Lyotard posits two opposing modes of knowledge. The first, narrative knowledge, acts as a form of knowledge-through-story. The tale does not necessarily have to be fictional for it to be considered narrative; it must, however, be transmittable through a story. Scientific knowledge, by contrast, seeks “true knowledge” (Lyotard 29). This “true knowledge,” according to Lyotard, cannot be achieved because it relies upon “the other, narrative, kind of knowledge” to legitimize itself (29). A paradox is established by which science can never be legitimized except through narratives. From the Enlightenment through the end of the nineteenth century, Western humanity sought to legitimize knowledge through master-narratives of “infinite progress and liberty” (Bamber 287). Those constructs eventually fail in the face of the two World Wars, which, many believe, made a mockery of notions of progress. Lyotard defines postmodernity as “incredulity towards meta-narratives” (xxiv). Those concerned with the accumulation of knowledge, in other words, lose their belief in progress and liberty throughout the twentieth century, and instead concern themselves with the accumulation of knowledge for the sake of power. Those who wield knowledge in a modern society, Lyotard maintains, are those who wield power. Hence, existing master-narratives become viewed as fundamentally flawed; they no longer transcend the human ideological realm.

That the majority of master-narratives were located in institutions which promulgated authority has led “postmodern social and literary analyses” to use the term master-narrative in order to describe “all sorts of legitimization strategies for the preservation of the status quo with regard to power relations and difference in general” (Bamberg 287). For an Englishman in Ireland such as Trollope – whose dominant status would have been legitimized by

narratives of progress – denying these master-narratives was unthinkable.⁵ The Famine had to be assimilated into the master-narratives of the day for it to become a digestible piece of knowledge, compatible with imperialism. The alternative was to view it as a nihilistic occurrence outside the realm of reason, outside the realm of progress, and outside the realm of God. As a result, “the sanctification of the idea of progress in the mid-nineteenth century has a direct bearing on the writing of the Famine” (Morash 15). Only if the Famine was interpreted as a tortured but necessary step on the path to a more modern industrial/agricultural structure (similar to 1840s England) could men such as Trollope rationalize their privileged position in Irish society. For them, molding the Famine as a subject was not just a task, but a profound and problematic struggle justifying their governing presence in Ireland.

Trollope’s attempt to explain the Famine evokes the English imperial endeavor and affirms its justification system. The Irish poor are likened to sub-human animals (with the unstated implication that it will take intelligent beings, such as English, to guide them from misery to progress). Explaining the reason for sudden starvation on such a large scale, the narrator claims that “the increasing swarms of the country” became too reliant upon the potato (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 71). The word “swarm” seems to indicate that the Irish are some form of inferior pest. Among this swarm, “some mouths, and they, alas! the weaker ones, would remain unfed” (75). Evoking pseudo-Darwinian narratives, Trollope’s narrator implies that those who perished in the Famine deserved it due to their weaknesses. Never are

⁵ Interestingly, Trollope’s regard for the imperial endeavor seems to have diminished somewhat after he spent several years outside Ireland. In *Phineas Finn* (1867) and *Phineas Redux* (1873), Phineas stands up for Irish Home Rule and tenant rights. Through these and other efforts he emerges as a moral hero within Trollope’s Palliser series. There appears to have been a disjunction between Trollope’s early career in Ireland and his writing in England. In Ireland his status relied upon the ideology of imperialism; in England he could mentally disassociate himself from it.

the Irish poor more dehumanized than when the Fitzgeralds prepare to leave Ireland after their family's disinheritance. After saying farewell to a collection of local peasants, Herbert's younger sister Mary exclaims "poor creatures, poor dear creatures; we shall never again have any more people to be fond of like that!" (401). Benign as Mary's comment appears, she nonetheless likens the peasants to nameless "creatures," and her tone seems to dismiss them as pets. Furthermore, the semicolon, separating two equal and independent clauses, implies that the Fitzgeralds are as unfortunate as the starving Irish poor because they will "never again have any more people to be fond of [them] like that!" Both the narrator and the protagonists, no matter how compassionate they appear in dealing with other members of the colonizing society, are unable to accept that their subjects are equally human.

Indeed, at many points throughout the novel, the Irish poor seem only to possess a textual function in their capacity to reflect everything positive about English rule and character. As the text describes relief measures taken by the ruling classes in Ireland, the narrator pauses to assert that "The hardest burden which had to be borne by those who exerted themselves at this period was the ingratitude of the poor for whom they worked" (94). He then goes on to excuse the peasants for feeling less than grateful, but concludes the section by observing that it was nonetheless a trying task to work so hard and yet remain "unappreciated by those with whom they so thoroughly commiserated, whose sufferings they were so anxious to relieve" (94). Even at the family's lowest fortune, not one of the Fitzgeralds – or, for that matter, not one Desmond – ever goes hungry in *Castle Richmond*. The narrative, which prioritizes the upper classes in making their romances more vital to the novel than the Famine, further dehumanizes the peasantry through dismissing their envy of the well-fed rich.

At no point of the novel is this process of dehumanization more evident than the several instances in which Herbert Fitzgerald visits the poor Irish working on his property.⁶ Herbert, upon encountering a group of the workers, stops to briefly converse with them. His first words to the assembled crowd, “so you have begun, *my men*,” evoke the colonial dynamic at play between them (225, emphasis added). The workers are, in all but a literal sense, his family’s property: the Fitzgeralds keep them alive by hiring them to perform perfunctory tasks and pay for the soup kitchens that feed their families. Their lives are entirely dependent upon the Fitzgeralds’ charity. As Herbert supervises the work they undertake, self-satisfaction seems to underlie his almost cheerily addressing them as “[his] men.” The workers are, after all, only alive because of his family’s benevolence. The narrator legitimizes Herbert’s sense of superiority when describing Thady Molloy and Shawn Brady, the two Irishmen ostensibly in command of the group. After reprimanding the “thirty or forty wretched-looking men [who] were clustered together in the dirt and slop and mud” for failing to begin working by 11AM, Herbert wonders aloud who leads the group (226). The narrator describes Molloy and Brady – titular leaders of the gang – as moving “up to be close to Herbert’s horse, but [neither of them says] a word towards vindicating their own fitness for command” (227). We are left to infer that only an Englishman, such as Herbert Fitzgerald, can lead this gang of “wretched-looking” creatures of the “dirt and slop and mud.”⁷ Again, we see triumphalism surrounding English identity, and weakness being written onto the Irish character.

⁶ As landlords, the Fitzgeralds would have been expected oversee work-relief efforts. With the exception of late 1847 through mid 1848, the government declared that no gratuitous relief was to be given. Hence, Herbert would be expected to oversee Irish workers, compensate them for their work, even if that work was bootless. These workers are attempting to level a hill, an endeavor Trollope disparaged.

⁷ Technically speaking, both Herbert and his cousin Owen are not English, but Anglo-Irish (descendants of the English who settled Ireland). Somewhat surprisingly, given the tortured relationship between the Irish, Anglo-Irish, and English, Trollope persists throughout the novel in identifying them both as Englishmen, ducking the

Herbert's second encounter with the workers further cements their superior-inferior relationship. He would, the narrator claims, "listen to them, and answer them, and give them, at any rate, the satisfaction which they derived from discoursing with him" (317). The text seems to argue that Herbert Fitzgerald, the model Englishman in Ireland, condescends to answer questions from his family's Irish tenants, while the workers are privileged to experience the joy that accompanies "discoursing" with their superiors. Herbert's interaction with the workers supports Declan Kiberd's theory that:

Victorian imperialists attributed to the Irish all those emotions and impulses which a harsh mercantile code had led them to suppress in themselves. Thus, if John Bull was industrious and reliable, Paddy was held to be indolent and contrary; if the former was mature and rational, the latter must be unstable and emotional; if the English were adult and manly, the Irish must be childish and feminine. (30)

Herbert, the "reliable," "mature," and levelheaded leader, brings order to the "childish" and "emotional" Irish workers. The worker insets provide the most overt connection between the Famine, narratives of imperialism, and master-narratives of progress. Casting the Irish worker as weak, subservient, and in need of reformist leadership, *Castle Richmond* implicitly argues that Ireland cannot overcome disasters such as the Famine without English stewardship.

In addition to dominating interactions with the peasantry, imperialist ideology permeates *Castle Richmond*'s love plot. Simultaneously proffering a symbolic defense of the narrative of progress-through-imperialism and providing a means for keeping the details of the Famine at a distance, the love plot allows Trollope to access the ideological message of

distinction between Anglo-Irish and English, which was perceived to be significant at the time. For instance, as Sir Thomas Fitzgerald dies believing that his son has been disinherited, the narrator observes that "The hopes and aspirations of his eldest son are as the breath of his nostrils to an Englishman who has been born to land and fortune" (378). The Fitzgeralds, the narrator claims, are English who happen to live in Ireland, not Anglo-Irish settlers.

the novel without depicting scenes of horror. Throughout the novel, the plot assumes an urgency which seems out of place given its Famine context; “the Famine struggles to intrude upon the narrative and displace the loves and tragedies of the Fitzgerald family, but is kept firmly in check by the narrative perspective” (Fegan 119). The symbolic message of the novel is important because it helps justify the Famine’s frustrated “struggles to intrude upon the narrative.” Trollope avoids direct confrontations with images of the Famine whenever possible; this allows him to displace the burden of creating master-narratives onto the symbolic meaning of the love plot.

Herbert represents the English style of governance while his cousin Owen emblemizes a Gaelic past. Owen’s rustic looks, romantic sensibilities, and reverence for everything honorable all point to an emotionalism perceived as absent from middle-class English culture. By contrast, Herbert’s Oxford education, enthusiasm for free-market reform, and constant levelheadedness align him with the English. Their rivalry focuses on Clara Desmond, the virginal heroine of *Castle Richmond*. Given their symbolic associations, the competition stands in for a struggle over the right to govern Ireland. Mary Jean Corbett argues that “Owen’s story allegorizes an older and persistent narrative trope of Irish resistance to English conquest” (142). Owen persists in claiming Clara as his own long after she has indicated that she will marry Herbert. Given his “Irish” character, we cannot help but see in Owen a reflection of Irishmen struck powerless by the English, clamoring for possession of their homeland. Ultimately, though, the novel’s “romantic allegory ... supports Ireland’s union with England and the British management of the Irish potato famine” (Matthews-Kane 117). Imperialistic competition serves as a backdrop to the love plot; Herbert’s victory signifies modernization in the governance of Ireland.

Trollope imbues these relatively straightforward symbolic identities with some level of ambiguity, accessing the vexed historical question of who possesses Ireland. Mary Hamer observes that “the last serious armed opposition to English rule in Ireland had been offered by Gerald Fitzgerald, the last Earl of Desmond, a rebel who fought against Queen Elizabeth I and was driven off the lands that had been owned by his family in Kerry and killed in a cabin in the Kerry mountains in 1583” (88). Each time we see the rebellious names Fitzgerald and Desmond on the page, they puncture *Castle Richmond*'s imperial ideology, evoking a troubled colonial past. Trollope's decision to name his romantic protagonists Fitzgerald and Desmond implicitly asks us to question who has the right to rule Ireland. In privileging Herbert, the Anglicized version of the Fitzgerald clan, Trollope claims Old Irish history for the English. Owen Fitzgerald, by the end of the text, wanders the English colonies hunting game in an attempt to forget Clara and his homeland. Though his affection for Owen is obvious, Trollope only allows the character to contribute to the imperial project in *other* colonies, where he does not distract from the English justification for governing Ireland. Owen's exile evokes the Irish Diaspora, displaced by the Famine, in search of identity in a foreign land.

Nevertheless, much is made by contemporary critics of Owen's persistent sexual appeal, despite his ultimate marginalization within the text. Bridget Matthews-Kane, in her essay on the role of symbolism in *Castle Richmond*, argues:

The need for romantic narrative tension to propel the plot forces Trollope to deny closure to Herbert and Clara's relationship and maintain Owen as legitimate romantic threat. In doing so, Trollope ultimately validates the intense attachment between Clara and Owen. Furthermore, Owen and Herbert, to work as allegorical characters that fit with Trollope's argument, must have certain specific characteristics, but the qualities Trollope selects to identify Herbert as Anglo and Owen as Old Irish make Owen the much more appealing love interest. In a final blow, Trollope's use of a romantic plot and

the reader's resulting expectation regarding the triumph of true love clashes with Trollope's conclusion. These narrative concerns combine to make an argument at cross-purposes with Trollope's allegory, thus sabotaging the power of Trollope's political argument in *Castle Richmond*. (122)

Despite the fact that Owen registers as a more appealing love interest, Herbert is the hero of the novel, romantically and ideologically. His attempts to woo Clara are often embedded in diction that conflates love with imperialism. After her first indication of interest in him, for instance, the narrator embeds us in his mind through free indirect discourse. We learn that "there is no period of life so happy as that in which a thriving lover leaves his mistress after his first success" (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 140). Most telling, though, is the narrator's observation that Herbert's success makes him "a conqueror who has mastered half a continent by his own strategy" (140). Herbert's victory is as much an imperial triumph vis-à-vis Owen as the manifestation of true love it purports to be. Though his choice of the romance novel creates a problematic expectation of the part of the reader, Trollope's impulse to dispel traumatic memories necessitates that he create a love plot that will ultimately stand in for his master-narratives of reform, progress, and civilization, keeping the Famine out of focus.

In perhaps the most direct intersection between the plot and the Famine, Herbert and Clara encounter Bridget Sheehy, an impoverished peasant-woman, and her family. Their love interest is, at this point in the novel, still new; the direct confrontation with a Famine victim thus acts as a testing-ground for their relationship and Clara's assessment of Herbert's character. The starving family approaches the couple and begs for sympathy, but Herbert at first seems unmoved. His adherence to political economy as an instructive ideology mimics the political bent of the narrator's routine textual interruptions, but he, unlike the narrator, cannot always abide by its instructions. As Bridget Sheehy first confronts Herbert and Clara,

the narrator steps inside Herbert's mind: "Herbert had learned the deep lessons of political economy, and was by no means disposed to give promiscuous charity on the road-side" (213). Yet, in the end, he gives her a shilling and two sixpence (not an insubstantial sum). It is one of the only moments in which either the narrator or one of the "English" characters in *Castle Richmond* defy political economy. Herbert's actions seem to refute the narrator's repeated claims that encouraging total self-sufficiency is the only way to bring structural change to Ireland. Our protagonist seems motivated by morality and conscience, rather than a mere emblem of English sensibilities and ideology. Yet such a reading of the charitable act is complicated by Herbert's competition with Owen. As Herbert persists in denying aid to Bridget Sheehy, she invokes his rival for Clara's love:

Shure thin an' I'll jist tramp on as fur as Hap House [Owen Fitzgerald's residence], I and my childher; that is av' they do not die by the road-side. Come on, bairns. My Owen won't be afther sending me to the Kanturk union when I tell him that I've travelled all thim miles to get a dhrink of milk for a sick babe; more by token when I tells him also that I'm one of the Desmond tinantry. It's he that loves the Desmonds, Lady Clara, - loves them as his own heart's blood. And it's I that wish him good luck with his love, in spite of all that's come and gone yet. Come on, bairns, come along; we have seven weary miles to walk. (215)

As Bridget claims that "it's [Owen] that loves the Desmonds ... loves them as his own heart's blood," Herbert has no choice but to offer charity. Quickly after this speech, Herbert offers the starving family his pocket change, and Clara seems appeased. The invocation of his rivalry with Owen, rather than any images of suffering, seems to motivate Herbert to charity. Does he offer Bridget money out of a sense of sympathy, or as part of a competitive quest for Clara's love? The question remains unanswered, despite the narrator's claim that "Herbert Fitzgerald, from the first moment of his interrogating the woman, had of course known that he would give her somewhat" (215). The narrator's assertion seems an

afterthought; an attempt to compensate for Herbert's deviation from the novel's political message. This digression is tolerated because the symbolism of the love-plot is as important to the novel's ideological significance as the narrator's interpretations of the Famine. As the romantic triangle between Owen, Herbert, and Clara consumes most of the narrative, it is imperative that Herbert, the emblem of progress-through-imperialism, emerges triumphant in a believable manner.

Almost as pervasive as the use of imperialist ideology to explain the disaster is Trollope's reliance upon providential narratives. *Castle Richmond*'s narrator continually reminds us that the Famine is a manifestation of God's mercy. In one emblematic moment, the narrator claims that during the "earlier part of [the Famine] the people did not seem to realize the fact that this scarcity and want had come from God" (91). The argument is left undefended until much later in the narrative, when the narrator claims that "the people themselves were learning that a great national calamity had happened, and that the work was God's work; and the Government had fully recognized the necessity of taking the whole matter into its own hands" (225).⁸ The hundred and thirty pages between these sweeping statements are filled not by fictional anecdotes of the Famine, but rather by Herbert Fitzgerald's romance and disinheritance plots. Trollope seems hesitant to depict the specifics of the transformation he claims comes from God. We are thus left perplexed when the narrator claims that by the end of 1847 "there was no longer any difference of opinion between rich and poor, between Protestant and Roman Catholic ... The famine was an established fact, and all men knew that it was God's doing" (Trollope, *Castle Richmond*

⁸ Christine Kinealy notes that Providentialist accounts of the Famine, which were common in England during the disaster, often focused on God's wrath: "Some evangelical Protestants viewed the Famine through providentialist eyes, seeing it as a judgement of God on a backward and superstitious people. This view was shared by some of the leading relief administrators, including Charles Trevelyan, the Chief Secretary at the British Treasury, and Sir Charles Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer" (8).

381). Where is the justification for this statement in the text? Most histories contend that the Famine has been a deeply contentious issue from the moment it began through the present day; what evidence compels us to accept the narrator's claim? The narrative's attempt to provide a providentialist account of the Famine feels as if it has been grafted onto an otherwise unrelated plot.

The focus on conforming to narratives of progress – whether based on providentialism or imperialism – leads to a consistent prioritizing of the plot over Famine. An anonymous early critic, reviewing *Castle Richmond* in the *Sunday Review* on May 19th 1860, noted the disjunction:

Perhaps the most curious part of the book is that which relates to the Irish famine. It is impossible not to feel that that was the part of it about which Mr. Trollope really cared, but that, as he had to get a novel out of it, he was duty bound to mix up a hash of Desmonds and Fitzgeralds with the Indian meal on which his mind was fixed as he wrote. (qtd. in Kelleher, *Feminization* 39-40)

Each chapter in which the narrator describes the state of Ireland features an abrupt shift: Trollope repeatedly interrupts the history-lesson with an acknowledgement of his task as a novelist. In the middle of a chapter entitled “The Famine Year,” after several pages arguing that the Famine was sent by God, the polemic is suddenly cut short: “But seeing that this book of mine is a novel, I have perhaps already written more on a dry subject than many will read” (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 74). In the pages prior to this interruption, the narrative seems to attain a focus unprecedented to that point in the novel. We can thus understand the reviewer's belief that Trollope cared more for the Famine than the Fitzgeralds. Trollope's placement of the interruption, however, is important. After arguing the Famine was sent from God, the narrator, “with thorough rejoicing, almost with triumph,” declares “that the idle, genteel class has been cut up root and branch,” and the poor peasant “has risen from his

bed of suffering a better man" (73). The narrator casts the Famine description aside in order to focus on a plot that only tangentially connects to the disaster. Before doing so, however, the narrator first incorporates the Famine into a master-narrative of progress. Once the overt assimilation into that narrative occurs, the novel more subtly encodes the same message into the plot through symbolic or linguistic signifiers. As I discuss later, the most significant enemy of this strategy is the Famine itself: whenever the narrator attempts to describe the effects of starvation, the master-narrative of progress fails.

Nonetheless, so long as the narrative writes meaning onto the Famine in general terms, a remarkable sense of hope for the future of Ireland permeates *Castle Richmond*. Trollope seems intent on debunking what he describes as the common Famine-era notion that "all that was good in [the world] was passing away ... that exertion was useless, and hope hopeless" (382). Despite their reductiveness and conservatism, master-narratives possess one redeeming characteristic when used to explain the Famine: they leave room for hope. In positing the Famine as just one of an infinite number of points along a linear socio-historical narrative of progress, the disaster becomes a manageable aspect of the past. Whether Catholic or Protestant, Irish or English, rich or poor, survivors of the Famine could comprehend the suffering if they placed their memory of the Famine within a narrative of progress. As we shall see in William Carleton's *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, hopelessness leads to a novel far more harrowing.

Omniscience and Authority

Henry Squander, manager of the Squander estate in the wake of his father's death mid-way through the novel, invokes a providentialist interpretation of the Famine as he watches starving tenants evicted from their homes:

We feel that *the people must die off – die out of the way* – and it is not the first landlord I have heard say as much. This is a blessed famine, God be praised! If we could only get one or two more of them we would be able to reconstruct our property, and proceed with success, because we could then get rid, in a natural way, of the superabundant. (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:78)

Carleton italicizes the most appalling components of a providentialist account: “We feel that *the people must die off – die out of the way*.” Throughout the novel, Harry solicits sex from peasants in order to postpone rent payments, allows a girl he impregnates to die of exposure, continually drinks himself into oblivion, and leads the family to ruin. He emblemizes popular caricatures of the landlord class. Thus Harry's claim that “this is a blessed famine, God be praised!” possesses none of the authority Trollope grants his narrator. Where *Castle Richmond* promises prosperity as the justification for a providentialist account, *The Squanders of Castle Squander* ridicules the notion that God could intentionally bring such misery to Ireland. *The Squanders of Castle Squander* attempts to undermine any account that displaces blame for the Famine; instead, the landlord class (and, by the end of the novel, most symbols of authority) are castigated for their culpability for the disaster.

Born Catholic to a Gaelic-speaking family in County Tyrone, William Carleton (1794-1869) spent his life navigating nineteenth-century Ireland's most problematic poles. Converting to Protestantism in the early 1820s, Carleton spent his early adulthood writing short stories “which were hostile to Catholicism and yet deeply insightful into peasant Catholic life” (Murphy 101). The most famous collection of them, *Traits and Stories of the*

Irish Peasantry (1830), cemented his reputation as the premier chronicler of Ireland's fading Gaelic-speaking Catholic peasantry (Fegan 8). Despite his literary success, Carleton remained socially spurned by the Protestant society he hoped to join. Carleton's life has been described as a stunning "example of cultural schizophrenia" due to his multiplicity of identities: "Catholic and Protestant, peasant and gentleman, countryman and town-dweller, Ulsterman and Dubliner, Irish speaker and writer of English prose, Carleton was in every way a divided man" (Webb viii). His novels of the 1830s and 1840s reflect Carleton's liminal identity. In them, he bitterly attacks diverse institutions such as absenteeism, Catholic secret societies, landlord profligacy, and the superstitions of the peasantry. *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, written at the Famine's zenith, emblemizes an author whose artistic "predicament might be best described as that of a literary middleman, representing the peasants to their social superiors, sometimes exploiting them a little, himself sandwiched none too comfortably between two classes, to neither of which he completely belonged" (Webb xvi). At different times, the novel castigates nearly every manifestation of Carleton's identity: peasants are too superstitious, the landlords too selfish, the English too negligent. Ideological voices and interpretations proliferate, resulting in conflicting sources of authority within the novel. Ultimately, though the Famine forces Carleton to muster many (often conflicting) partisan explanations, traumatic memories sabotage each attempt to impose a stable narrative upon the event.

The Squanders of Castle Squander, like *Castle Richmond*, struggles to encode the Famine within a narrative that shapes it into digestible knowledge. Carleton discards fictional convention and addresses his readership directly in his attempt to make sense of the disaster, producing textual chaos rather than increased ideological coherence. In her study of

authors who encode a traumatic past into their literature, Deborah Horvitz asks: “Can narrative, itself, by compelling victim-survivors to remember and to repeat stories suffused with terror, panic, and pain, serve a palliative role in the healing process?” She then observes that “psychoanalysis believes that crucial to recovering from an experience of trauma is the capacity and willingness to incorporate that traumatic event *inside* one’s self as an indispensable piece of personal history and identity” (6).⁹ Carleton’s novel similarly constitutes an attempt “to incorporate [the Famine] *inside*” himself and refashion it as “an indispensable piece of personal history and identity.” These attempts are invariably made through partisan rhetoric, though Carleton does not restrict himself to one ideology. In a quest to establish the authority to possess the Famine, Carleton strips the reader and all characters of interpretative agency; by the end of the novel, we are an inert audience, passively receiving his interpretation of the historical event. As the novel morphs into an extended history lesson with occasional fictional interludes that serve as illustrations of Carleton’s interpretations, we see an author desperately struggling to rationalize nature’s slaughter, but unable to locate legitimate sources of authority.

Though it has received more critical attention, Carleton’s 1845 novel *The Black Prophet* – written just as the potato crop was beginning to fail but well before contemporary Ireland intuited the eventual impact of this hunger – is a pre-traumatic depiction of starvation. As a result, the novel maintains a coherent plot, which marginalizes depictions of Famine. Not until 1847, popularly remembered as “Black 47,” did the public acknowledge

⁹ In *Literary Trauma*, Horvitz studies North American women writers who “assume responsibility for ‘witnessing’ and testifying to traumatic events that are pervasively cultural and, at the same time, experienced and interpreted as personal.” In particular, she focuses upon “Charlotte Perkins Gillman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ (1892), Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood, or the Hidden Self* (1902-1903), Gayl Jones’s *Corregidora* (1975), Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992), Joyce Carol Oates’s *What I Lived For* (1994), and Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace* (1996)” (1).

the extent of the Great Famine. Hence, when Carleton wrote *The Black Prophet*, he was able to contain famine within an “aesthetically successful” novel; by the time he wrote *The Squanders of Castle Squander* amid the Great Famine, traumatic memory sabotaged his attempt at novelization.¹⁰ Set amid the (comparatively) minor famine of 1817, *The Black Prophet* is more historical fiction than fictionalized account of a current catastrophe. Because it is able to incorporate starvation into the narrative without imploding as a result, the novel little resembles *The Squanders of Castle Squander*. In *The Black Prophet*'s introduction, Carleton implores us to remember that the novel is, first and foremost, a fiction:

Let not the reader imagine, however, that the principal interest of this Tale is drawn from so gloomy a topic as famine. The author trusts that the workings of those passions and feelings which usually agitate human life, and constitute the character of those who act in it, will be found to constitute its chief attraction. (viii)

Instead of Famine, *The Black Prophet*'s “chief attraction” consists of “those passions and feelings which usually agitate human life,” and its narrative structure reflects that prioritization. By the time Carleton writes *The Squanders of Castle Squander* in the immediate aftermath of the Famine, a topic “so gloomy” as country-wide starvation consumes his narrative. In *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, fiction becomes mayhem, as the narrative hosts multiple partisan voices but lacks centralized authority. Traumas, both personal and collective, replace Carleton's former composure, which allowed him to contain the Famine in *The Black Prophet*.

A crisis of authority catalyzed by the Famine causes Carleton to insert two unassimilated narrators into *The Squanders of Castle Squander*; confronted by trauma,

¹⁰ The vast majority of critical engagement with Carleton's Famine writing focuses upon *The Black Prophet*. It and *Castle Richmond* are the most frequently analyzed Famine novels written by eye-witnesses. *The Squanders of Castle Squander* is typically cast as an aesthetic failure, worthy of little critical attention. Given that Carleton wrote *The Squanders of Castle Squander* as he was watching the Famine devastate Ireland, I believe we see in his “aesthetic failure” manifestations of a mind and a society haunted by trauma.

Carleton loads his novel with divergent attempts to enclose the disaster. At the outset of the novel, a first-person narrator exposes the excesses of landlord life. Randy O'Rollick, an educated young Catholic peasant elevated to tutor his landlord's children, bemoans the wastefulness of the Squanders family, creating an expectation that he will blame the landlord class for the Famine. As time passes and Randy's position changes to that of a pseudo-member of the Squanders family, he seems increasingly tolerant of their vices. By that point, a new omniscient narrator interrupts the plot, discards the story, and allows his interpretation to consume the narrative. Attempting to wrest ideological control of the novel from Randy, Carleton's omniscient narrator usurps the narrative in order to direct the reader's interpretation of the Famine. Because Randy's subjective commentary fails to contain the disaster, Carleton attempts to muster objectivity by inserting an omniscient version of himself into the novel.¹¹ The omniscient narrator then appropriates the narrative with increasing frequency as the novel progresses, penning a politicized historical tract thinly veiled as fiction.

At the outset of the novel, Randy's pointed denigrations of the Squanders family mark him as a critic of the landlord class in Ireland. He begins his tenure as tutor the morning after a typically decadent party in Castle Squander. Walking into a room filled with recovering revelers, Randy observes that "in no tap-room in the most profligate slums of a metropolis could one find such an instance of drunken debauchery" (Carleton, *Squanders* 1:39). Quickly afterwards, he continues moralizing: "Now it so happened that the year in

¹¹ See "Appendix" for a representative excerpt featuring both narrators. The quotation begins as Randy returns from a visit to the Squanders' prosperous uncle. The omniscient narrator's interruption at the outset of the third paragraph typifies his abrupt intrusiveness. Throughout the second volume of *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, which deals more directly with the Famine, the omniscient narrator controls the majority of the narrative, as he does in this excerpt. Carleton's invocation of *Valentine M'Clutchy* – which he wrote during the throughout 1844 and early 1845 – emblemizes the omniscient narrator's tendency to buttress his own narration with outside sources. The section quoted is taken from Carleton: *The Squanders of Castle Squander* 2:211-215.

question was one of severe famine, and I could not help reflecting, even then, that the sum of five pounds, subscribed to the relief fund by Mr. Squander, took a very inhuman shape” (1:44). Further, he connects the Squanders to the Irish landlord class, who were popularly vilified as excessively lavish. Detailing Mr. Squander’s mismanagement of his estate, Randy claims that “the system by which he acted was that which predominated almost without exception among the landlords of Ireland” (1:47). Randy’s depiction of the Squanders as immoral spendthrifts invites the reader to condemn the Irish landlord class for their profligacy and negligent treatment of the peasantry. Thus, when Mr. Squander denies Randy’s request to leave and study at a prestigious Dublin college, he invokes the entire landlord class in his frustration: “I was forced to remain in what I felt to be a falling house” (1:72). By implication, the landlords of Ireland are a “falling” class, suffocating the country and its peasantry through their reckless lifestyle.

Randy’s association of the landlord class with Ireland’s ills reaches its apogee with the death of Mr. Squander. Though characters within the novel are occasionally caricatured for claiming that the Famine has divine origins, only at this moment in the novel does the text evoke the judgment of what the text terms a “supernatural” power. Mr. Squander may quickly tell his sons to “avoid [his life and] amend [their own],” but his imputation goes unheeded (Carleton, *Squanders* 1:235). His death scene provides the most melodramatic moment of the first half of the novel:

He had scarcely spoken, when the knock – the jingle of tumblers and glasses, and the awful shaking of the windows were all repeated. ... That the noises could not be accounted for on natural principles was evident to, and felt by us all, and indeed the prevailing impression was that a supernatural intimation was given, and that by a supernatural being then present in the very room with us. Whilst revolving upon this matter, the old man’s eyes seemed to fix, as if upon some object at the opposite end of the room. (1:236)

Amid “jingling tumblers and glasses” (signifiers of Mr. Squander’s decadent negligence), a “supernatural being” removes the last traces of life from the landlord. The melodramatic death in *The Squanders of Castle Squander* calls attention to the patriarch’s just punishment. As if to remind the reader of the interpretative implications of the death, Mr. Squander’s prosperous brother reminds his nephews that a landlord’s interests and those of his tenantry are, and should always remain, identical (1:259). Nevertheless, the novel’s initial message – that the dissolute landlord class is to blame for Ireland’s woes – is complicated by Randy’s shifting allegiances. When Randy admits that he “became attached to the family ... [Mr. Squander’s] failings were those of his class, his day, his position,” he seems at odds with the novel’s ideological mission (1:219). Because his condemnation of the landlord class remains so persistent and vitriolic throughout the opening of the novel, we expect Randy to posit they are at fault for the socio-economic conditions that create the Famine. When he does not, the narrative teeters on the edge of losing sight of its dominant message, so Carleton inserts the omniscient narrator in order to reaffirm the novel’s ideological coherence.

As Randy becomes increasingly ensconced in the class whose faults we expect him to expose, the omniscient narrator intrudes with increasing frequency to ensure that the novel conveys the “correct” ideological message. This second, more overtly political, narrator fundamentally alters the narrative shape of the novel. No longer is the novel’s message encoded through symbolism or character dialogue. Our new narrator, speaking in an authoritative “we,” interprets the Famine and its causes for us. Carleton aligns this narrator with himself, even at one point citing at length *Valentine M’Clutchy* (1844-5), one of his more popular novels:

We alluded, in a previous part of this work, to an extermination which took place in Galway, and which excited considerable attention in the House of

Commons; and we stated at the same time that the facts and circumstances connected with it resembled in a surprising manner a description of such an event which we had written some years before. We must subjoin that description from "Valentine M'Clutchy, the Irish Agent" because we know that it may stand for a general diorama of what has taken place within the last six or eight years. (2:215)

Claiming *Valentine M'Clutchy* as a work the omniscient narrator "had written some years before," Carleton establishes that this new narrative presence embodies his guiding authorial hand. When the omniscient narrator speaks, we leave the fictional world of Randy and the Squanders, entering instead the harrowing realities of post-Famine Ireland. The omniscient narrator struggles to explain a country-wide trauma to its readership. Following Mr. Squander's death, the historical and ideological sensibilities of the new omniscient narrator dominate *The Squanders of Castle Squander*. Randy and his fictional world are used as occasional set-pieces to contextualize the historical arguments made by Carleton on the state of Ireland.

Defending his decision to use extra-textual citation throughout *Squanders*, the omniscient narrator emphasizes his interventionist role in shaping the novel's core interpretation of the Famine. "In order to show our readers the havoc which law necessarily made upon Irish property, we shall give them a quotation from a very fair and able article in the "Dublin University Magazine" for March, 1851" (2:74, emphasis added). After the citation, he summarizes: "By this most able and comprehensive sketch *our readers will see at a glance* the frightful state in which Irish property lay" (2:76, emphasis added). Carleton cites contemporary academic sources to ensure that his readers fully comprehend his political message and to enhance the sense that this novel is not fiction, but reality. In the midst of a tangent on Irish working houses, Carleton cites Charles Trevelyan's contention that "The average number employed in October was 114,000; in November 285,000; in December

440,000; and in January, 1847, 570,000" (2:116-7). In this instance, as in so many throughout the novel, the text bears closer resemblance to historical rather than fictional writing. The transition back into the fictional plot, however, strikes an oddly reluctant tone: "It is not our purpose, however, at this period of our story, to enter directly into the description of the [Famine], because we must return to the family of the Squanders with whom we have to deal" (2:119). The omniscient narrator brings his ability to shape the novel into focus, yet seems reluctant to return to the Squanders family, "with whom we have to deal" because they are, at this point, a distraction from his more pressing task: to explain, and thereby contain, the Famine.

The structural intrusion by the omniscient narrator subverts the notion that *The Squanders of Castle Squander* concerns itself with the fictional world of the Squanders family; in Carleton's effort to possess the Famine's history in the name of a faction, fiction becomes an expendable medium. In one emblematic moment, Carleton's omniscient narrator discusses theories of what causes Irish distress:

As to the cause of the distress of Ireland, there have been two theories put forth by two very able men. We are not ourselves fond of theories, because they contract and narrow the mind to the beloved point which the theorist keeps steadily in his eye with so much complacency. Be this as it may, the men we speak of are able men ... The gentlemen I allude to are Mr. [John Stewart] Mill and Professor Hancock. Mr. Mill says:

"I presume it will be needless to expend any argument in proving that the very foundation of the of the economical evils of Ireland is the cottier system; that, while peasant rents, fixed by competition are the practice of the country, to expect industry – useful activity – any restraint on population but by death – or any (the smallest) diminution of poverty is to look for figs on thistles, and grapes on thorns."¹²

Now, we really profess our ignorance as to whether Mr. Mill be an Irishman or an Englishman, but from this quotation we should suppose him to be the latter. His *unacquaintance* with the cottier system – for we will not give it a harsher name – is otherwise perfectly unaccountable. The cottier

¹² Carleton quotes from John Stewart Mill's "Principles of Political Economy, with some of their applications to Social Philosophy," vol. 1, p. 381.

system has nothing to whatsoever to do with the competition of land in Ireland, and does not affect the condition of the country at all, although it is itself deeply affected by that condition. If Mr. Mill does not know the nature of the cottier system – as it is clear he does not – we shall tell him. (152-3)

Moments such as these dominate the second half of *The Squanders of Castle Squander*.

Interpreting Irish history, grappling with extra-textual academic sources, and attempting to construct an aura of objectivity, the omniscient narrator struggles desperately to possess the ideological interpretation of the Famine, imploding the novel as a genre. Carleton's narrative barely resembles normative conceptions of a novel as it instructs John Stewart Mill on the "nature of the cottier system." As a consequence of these frequent tirades, Carleton strips the reader of any interpretive agency; under the omniscient narrator's reign, the novel becomes a history lesson with occasional fictional interludes. Urgently attempting to portray Ireland's ills in the midst of the Famine, Carleton abandons the indirect approach of pure fiction, which allows for multiplicity of interpretation, constructing instead a textual presence that attempts to embody objectivity while peddling ideology.

The omniscient narrator employs two tactics to establish hegemonic control over the text's ideological interpretation: first, he writes an identity of candor onto himself, and, second, he cites multiple extra-textual sources in order to buttress his assessment of the Famine. After describing a scene of peasant misery, Carleton attempts to establish control over the truth: "truth must be told, and always shall be, as it always has been, by us" (*Squanders* 2:113). Configuring himself as an eternal well-spring of accuracy, the omniscient narrator precludes narratives which run counter to his own. A direct correspondence between "truth" and the narrator obliges him "by a love of truth" to "deal forth ... stern justice" to the Irish landlords guilty of causing the Famine (1:209). In

attempting to construct an identity rooted in omniscience, the narrator cites sundry articles on the state of Ireland. Inter-textual citations within in the novel, Christopher Morash observes:

... [Consist] of an essay by J.F. Waller from the *Dublin University Magazine*, an extract from Professor W.N. Hancock's lecture to the Statistical Section of the British Association in 1850, an account from a provincial newspaper of a starving man driven to cannibalism, a section transcribed from Carleton's own *Valentine M'Clutchy*, a copy of the educational syllabus of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, and the author's opinions on everything from ancient Celtic civilization to Young Ireland. (177-8)

The chaotic nature of traumatic memory necessitates that the omniscient narrator's attempts to contain the Famine rupture, even when he draws upon extra-textual sources, such as "Professor W.N. Hancock's lecture" or "an account from a provincial newspaper," to ease the task. This approach lends the narrative a sense of anarchy, despite the omniscient narrator's effort to impose ideological coherence onto *The Squanders of Castle Squander* and onto the Famine.

Perhaps the most telling intersection between the omniscient narrator and the plot occurs as he frames and then describes the demise of the Cassidy family. The Cassidys serve as an isolated fictional pocket amid the historical tirade of the omniscient narrator. Their only textual presence occurs in this scene; afterwards, we never hear of them again, nor are they incorporated into the rest of the plot. The Cassidy family only provides a textual function as an illustration of the omniscient narrator's historical interpretations. After several pages lamenting eviction policies, the omniscient narrator interrupts himself:

As general description, however, gives, after all, but a faint notion of these matters, we will ask our readers to accompany us to a poor cabin or hut, where we will place a single affectionate and virtuous family before their eyes. They will then have an opportunity of witnessing the force of that which we wish to explain, as well as of the beautiful domestic love and tenderness of the Irish poor. (*Squanders* 2:15)

In one paragraph, Carleton explains his novel's odd disjuncture between explicitly historical tirades and fictional interludes. General descriptions give "but a faint notion of these matters," so human characters are interjected in order to make the Famine more real. The narrator's claim that he "will place a ... family before [the readers'] eyes" calls attention to his authorial role as shaper of the text. The scene itself presents an emotionally charged depiction of tenant eviction. Peter Cassidy, whose family will soon lose their cabin due to Harry Squander's oppressive policies, bemoans the fact that, due to his famished condition, he will not be "able to do a man's work any longer" (2:19-20). Nor is that the worst of it; upon arriving at the poor house, Peter will be separated from his wife, and both of them from their children. Contemplating his family's prospects, Peter says "in a low, broken voice, 'poor darlins of my breakin' heart, well as I love you, we'll be separated soon and forever'" (2:22). His favorite child, muttering "feverish ebullitions" on his deathbed, begins repeating "yes, yes, daddy, and I will go with you" (2:22). The wrenching inset story, which humanizes the Famine, achieves a sorrow and poignancy only very occasionally accessed in *Castle Richmond*. This balance does not persist; we never hear of the Cassidy family again, and within the next two hundred pages the Squanders only enter the text sporadically. By the final sixty-five pages of the novel, the Squanders receive a scant four paragraphs of textual attention. As Carleton focuses on the grotesque scenes of starvation which haunt him, his novel loses any sense of narrative cohesion.

By the end of the novel, the omniscient narrator abandons fiction altogether as a means of demonstrating its interpretation, relying instead on extra-textual citations. While berating what he refers to as Catholic "superstition," the omniscient narrator argues:

Be you protestant or presbyterian, unitarian, methodist [sic], or what you may, you are at liberty to blaspheme God, or anything else that is holy, until you get

black in the face, but if you utter, in the presence of an ignorant Roman Catholic, one syllable against his priest, you will be certain to come in for what is facetiously termed “a shirtful [sic] of sore bones.” We mention these facts in no unfriendly spirit; but because we are of opinion that no country can ever properly raise itself to a state of prosperity, or of moral and religious elevation, so long as the intellect, the will, and the feelings are dragged down by such superstition as this. The following quotation from the “Galway Vindicator” will perfectly illustrate the view which we take of those ignorant notions which so completely obstruct Irish industry and progress. (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:179)

Here, Carleton attacks “in no unfriendly spirit” the “ignorant Roman Catholic;” ten pages later, he vociferates against the injustices of landlord greed. Within the context of a novel, perhaps the most desperate tactic for containing a trauma is a rejection of fiction. Piling extra-textual sources such as the “Galway Vindicator” into *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, the omniscient narrator shatters the illusion of a fictional world, offering instead inchoate partisan interpretations of the Famine. Randy’s first person account of a falling house; the omniscient narrator’s self-conscious fusion of fiction and history; and the citation of extra-textual sources: all fail to possess the Famine. Carleton’s multiple attempts to contain the Famine through authorial narration remain bootless as the disaster eludes all narrative possession.

Castle Richmond (through master-narratives) and *The Squanders of Castle Squander* (through an authorial narrator claiming omniscience) attempt to tame the Famine and control its ideological interpretation, but both fail to contain the traumatic chaos that possesses Trollope and Carleton. The remainder of this essay examines the difficulties inherent in imposing a monolithic reading onto the Famine. Due to its traumatic nature, the disaster frustrates attempts to pigeonhole it and assign hegemonic political value to its wreckage.

Punctured Ideology

Trollope's narrator attempts to fit the Famine into reductive master-narratives of progress, and in so doing obscures the extent of devastation. Yet instances arise within the text in which the interpretative principles the narrator uses to explain the Famine are cruelly mocked by the images presented. *Castle Richmond* may thus be said to lack a unified voice. Concentrating upon the two most focused encounters with Famine sufferers, I examine moments of subversiveness in Trollope's novel. As Bridget Sheehy confronts Herbert and Clara, startling claims made by the narrator create a heightened sense of anxiety and complicity otherwise absent from the text. More drastically, Herbert's encounter with a starving family provides the most disturbing moment in the novel; as the family suffers immensely, Herbert merely gazes at them before acting ineffectually. Though the novel successfully addresses the Famine in general through master-narratives, it fails to assimilate the catastrophe once it focuses on particular and human repercussions. Traumatic memories associated with the Famine resist complete incorporation into nineteenth-century narratives of progress; in *Castle Richmond*, they puncture the ideological justifications for imperialism.

Whenever Trollope depicts scenes of individual horror rather than discussing the state of Ireland generally through his narrator, traumatic memories subvert his intended interpretation of the Famine. Cathy Caruth observes:

Trauma is the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge - that cannot, as George Bataille says, become a matter of "intelligence" - and thus continually returns, in its exactness, at a later time. Not having been fully integrated as it occurred, the event cannot become ... a "narrative memory" that is integrated into a completed story of the past. (153)

Castle Richmond's Famine scenes exhibit this refusal to "be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge." They resist the narrator's attempt to integrate them "into a completed story

of the past:" master-narratives of progress, imperialism, and religion. The work of the narrator ruptures as trauma enters the text, resisting narrative modes of knowledge.

In examining the Famine scenes' resistance to ideological assimilation, I turn to Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia. His landmark study, *The Dialogic Imagination*, details the infinite and inherently ideological voices that permeate the novel as a genre. He argues that each speaker at each moment uses an individualized, irreducible language. As such, all utterances are "specific points of view on the world, forms of conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values" (291-2). For instance, when we encounter the gang of Irish workers in *Castle Richmond*, a competing linguistic code (and, thus, a competing world-view) momentarily surfaces from within the text. One unnamed speaker, who has been standing in the freezing Irish countryside for hours, speaks to Herbert: "And it's martial cowl'd standing here thin... without a bit to ate or a sup to dhrink since last night, and only a lump of the yally mail" (Trollope 227). Their brogue punctures the narrator's "official language," and we momentarily comprehend that human experience defies the reductiveness of one omniscient voice. This dynamic leads Bakhtin to conclude that "there are no 'neutral' words and forms ... language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents" (293). The narrator, the tenants, the landlords: all speak through individualized and inherently politicized languages.

Equally important for the purposes of this paper is Bakhtin's account of ancient parodies, which he posits as precursors of the modern novel. In mimicking the "high art" of epics and tragedies, ancient parodies rip "the word away from its object" (55). Parodies paved the way for the novel in that they:

... liberated the object from the power of language in which it had become entangled as if in a net; they destroyed the homogenizing power of myth over language; they freed consciousness from the power of the direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own language. A distance arose between language and reality that was to prove an indispensable condition for authentically realistic forms of discourse. (Bakhtin 60)

Hence, when a novel embodies the infinite languages of heteroglossia, we understand that no one language is the correct, official one, encapsulating the true definitions of each word.

Instead, words possess meaning only in their context, which is continually shifting. Though the narrator of *Castle Richmond* attempts to construct an official language and official ideological interpretation of the Famine, he is undermined whenever we intuit that the disaster allows for a multiplicity of experiences and interpretations.

Nevertheless, voices attempting to create a sense of linguistic hegemony – such as the narrator in *Castle Richmond* – work to minimize the impact of heteroglossic moments in the text. Their efforts are met by varying levels of success, but occasionally a word and its context stubbornly refuse to be appropriated:

Not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. (Bakhtin 294)

The remainder of this section explores the tension that accompanies moments when narrator's words "cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it." They are the moments that complicate *Castle Richmond's* ideological interpretation. Significantly, this tension surfaces only when the narrator describes the human ramifications of the Famine. As in ancient parodies, the narrator's steady, jovial narration is ripped "from its object" (the Famine) and exposed as a false attempt at myth-making.

Herbert and Clara's encounter with the Sheehy family provides the first major moment in the novel in which a pro-imperialist reading becomes problematic. In it, the desperately poor and hungry Bridget Sheehy and her children request alms from Herbert and Clara, who are in the midst of their courtship. Adhering to the principles of political economy, Herbert instructs Bridget to take her family to the poorhouse at Kanturk, where they will be given a "meal twice a week" (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 214). The absurdity of his advice is highlighted several paragraphs later, when the narrative focuses on the state of the Sheehys:

[Bridget] undid the bundle at her back, and laying the two babes down on the road, showed that the elder of them was in truth in a fearful state. It was a child nearly two years of age, but its little legs seemed to have withered away; its cheeks were wan, and yellow and sunken, and the two teeth which it had already cut were seen with terrible plainness through its emaciated lips. Its head and forehead were covered with sores; and then the mother, moving aside the rags, showed that its back and legs were in the same state. (214)

How Herbert believes that a meal, "twice a week," will bring the Sheehy family back from the brink of starvation is anyone's guess. In this moment, when the narrator does not overtly interpret the Famine from a distance, the narratives employed by the novel to fit the Famine within a tale of progress fail. We are left, instead, with images of "little legs... withered away" and an infant covered in sores. In the place of divine mercy, the novel offers ghastly horror. When Herbert only very reluctantly grants Bridget "a shilling and two sixpences," the narrator seems to castigate him for his charitable act, and, as discussed earlier, the novel leaves it unclear whether Herbert grants charity out of a sense of sympathy, or in competition with Owen Fitzgerald. For the first time, the benevolent imperialist's actions come under scrutiny.

Margaret Kelleher astutely argues that this heightened anxiety could result from the realization of the “unthinkable.” Employing a psychoanalytic approach, she argues that Famine scenes often enact the collapse of what Julia Kristeva terms:

“[The] primal shelter” that “[ensures] the survival of the newborn.” With the collapse of the mother’s ability to care for her children, so too evaporates any sense of human interconnectedness and security. The mother, who cannot sustain her child in a time of Famine, develops an unsettling and threatening quality. (*Feminization* 7)

That the narrative’s first ideologically ambiguous moment coincides with the first instance of the “unthinkable” is fitting. Narrating the Famine, with its disruption of nineteenth-century narratives of progress, creates a sense of textual anxiety, marginalizing any attempt to code the disaster within a narrative of progress. The image of Bridget Sheehy stalking the barren lands with a bundle of miserable, unsupportable children on her back offers a counterpoint to the very notion of civilization. God - who the narrator invokes throughout the novel as a means of explaining the Famine - remains conspicuously absent throughout the Sheehy inset. How could He, given his infinite mercy and omnipotence, order the nation-wide collapse of the “primal shelter?” The Bridget Sheehy inset, Trollope’s first depiction of textualized trauma, collapses the master-narratives used elsewhere to contain the Famine.

Even more startling is Herbert’s intrusion, towards the end of the novel, into the desolate countryside cabin of a starving family. Throughout the encounter, Herbert’s status as a benign envoy from England – sent to civilize the Irish – faces scrutiny. Though the inset is framed within the narrator’s steady and oftentimes jovial tone, the details of the scene prove vastly more horrific. Even as Herbert approaches the cabin (in order to escape a storm), the narrative almost invites us to question his legitimacy. As Herbert leads his horse into the cabin, the narrator observes that “in England no one would think of taking his steed

into a poor man's cottage, and would hardly put his beast into a cottager's shed without leave asked and granted, but people are more intimate with each other, and take greater liberties in Ireland" (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 405). The narrator attempts to explain Herbert's behavior, but we cannot help but wonder whether a poor Irish peasant would take a similar liberty with his landlord. Permitting his horse to wander around the cabin of a family he does not know, Herbert's exploitative behavior signifies imperial domination. Herbert's whims dominate the surrounding Irish property, just as he commands his horse. A distasteful tone permeates the narrator's description of the cabin: "It was small and wretched to look at ... a miserable, low-roofed, damp, ragged tenement, as wretched as anything that might be seen even in the county Cork" (405). When contrasted with the narrator's praise of the Castle Richmond estate – "it was a good, substantial, modern family residence ... with a lawn sloping down to the river, with kitchen gardens and walls for fruit, with ample stables ... as regards its appearance Castle Richmond might have been in Hampshire or Essex" – the description of the cabin assumes an air of condescension (3). In the description of the cabin and Herbert's intrusion into a tenant's house, the narrator employs language at odds with the sympathetic goal of Trollope's hopeful Famine novel. As such, the narrative seems – in this instance – to participate in a micro-linguistic rebellion. The narrator's words assume a dual-meaning: on the surface, they accurately convey the normative meaning of the words he uses. On a separate level, however, we are invited to see them as corrupt words, symbolizing a bankrupt ideology. In this sense, they represent Bakhtin's tearing "of the word away from its object."

Herbert's experience inside the cabin provides a more harrowing and reproachable instance symbolizing colonial misrule. Initially assuming the inhabitants of the cabin were out for the day, he is shocked to realize that "the place was inhabited:"

Squatting in the middle of the cabin, seated on her legs crossed under her, with nothing between her and the wet earth, there crouched a woman with a child in her arms. At first, so dark was the place, Herbert hardly thought the object before him was a human being. (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 405)

Our English protagonist is struck speechless by the sight. He stares at the nearly naked woman and her child for a prolonged period before finally observing that she seems "to be very poorly off here" (407). Like the narrator's descriptions above, Herbert's interpretation seems wildly off the mark. He looks at a family on the brink of total starvation and responds with a panicked understatement. His mistake is more acutely realized several paragraphs later, when he moves the solitary object in the cabin, a bundle of hay, and finds the body of a dead child underneath it:

He turned his back from the wall in which the small window-hole had been pierced, so that a gloom of light fell upon the bundle at his feet, and he could see that the body of a child was lying there, stripped of every vestige of clothing.

For a minute or two he said nothing – hardly indeed, knowing how to speak, and looking from the corpselike woman to the lifelike corpse, and then from the corpse back to the woman, as though he expected that she would say something unasked. But she did not say a word, though she so turned her head that her eyes rested on him. (408)

This moment of severe panic, in which Herbert looks "from the corpselike woman to the lifelike corpse," is followed by an intrusion from the narrator. In it, he defends the Gregory clause, a controversial provision of English relief efforts that refused aid to anyone who could find work.¹³ This particular family, the narrator argues, are one of the unfortunate

¹³ Trollope refers here to the "infamous Gregory Clause, which barred tenants who held more than a quarter-acre of land from relief" (O'Grada 39). As the majority of Irish farmers, who often lived on plots of land just

ramifications of the otherwise “salutary” provision. He argues that “exceptions were of course made in such cases, if they were known: but then it was so hard to know them!” (409). In this defense of those administering Famine relief, we can detect hints of Trollope’s lingering guilt. The inset illustrates Melissa Fegan’s description of first generation Famine novelists: “the literature of the Famine ... was written by and for those who survived the Famine, not its victims, and any attempt to create a solidarity of suffering between those who starved and those who watched implies the guilt and shame of those who lived to tell the tale” (212). More than any other scene in the novel, the cabin inset resists the narratives of progress within which the narrator hopes to frame the disaster. As we see pangs of Trollope’s guilt enter the novel, confident attempts to portray the Famine as a merciful act of God and harbinger of progress crumble.

Herbert’s ineffectual response to the crisis calls attention to the failings of the other narrative *Castle Richmond* uses to organize the Famine: imperialism. The narrator focuses on Herbert’s emotions while describing the scene; “he felt that he was stricken with horror as he remained there in the cabin with the dying woman and the naked corpse of the poor dead child. But what was he to do?” (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 410). The narrator’s sympathy seems more invested in Herbert’s turmoil than the fate of the starving peasantry. Herbert’s handling of the situation only furthers the sense that both he and the narrator are hopelessly out of touch with the suffering poor. His remedy consists of covering the dead, naked child with a “silk handkerchief” – itself a symbol of his wealth and prestige – and offering the mother “a silver coin or two” (410). While taking his leave, Herbert promises to “send some one to you ...some one that shall take the poor child and bury it, and who shall move you and

over a quarter-acre, were almost totally reliant upon the potato, the Gregory Clause exacerbated the already ruinous Famine.

the other one into the workhouse” (411).¹⁴ Herbert’s paltry efforts at saving the family are fruitless; we learn by the chapter’s conclusion that the mother and infant die before the relief team arrives. Margaret Kelleher observes that, despite Herbert’s incompetence, the narrator strives to absolve him of guilt. Thus, when Herbert presents the starving woman with “a silver coin or two,” the narrator “ignores the absurdity of giving coins, themselves only symbols of help, to a woman who lacks the opportunity, even life-energy, to exchange them” (*Feminization* 54). Thus, the narrator’s claim that the family’s “doom had been spoken before Herbert had entered the cabin,” acts as a guilt-ridden and transparent attempt to exonerate Herbert of blame (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 411). Despite the narrator’s repeated efforts, the imperial project emerges a vastly insufficient counter to the Famine. In engaging the effects of the disaster so directly, Trollope injects tension into his novel; the narrator’s efforts to incorporate the Famine into master-narratives of progress, which dominate the majority of the novel, are sabotaged by the emotional trauma accessed by depicting suffering.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the inset is the lurid fascination the text and Herbert seem to take in scrutinizing the bodies of the starving family. Tensions – both erotic and colonial – pervade the narrator’s description of Herbert in the cabin:

... and then he looked at [the mother] more closely. She had on her some rag of clothing which barely sufficed to cover her nakedness, and the baby which she held in her arms was covered in some sort; but he could see, as he came to stand close over her, that these garments were but loose rags which were

¹⁴ The history of workhouses as a solution to poverty demonstrates the effect ideology had in Whitehall when implementing governmental programs in Ireland: “The Irish Poor Inquiry, conducted in the wake of its more famous English counterpart, rejected the workhouse as a solution to poverty. Instead Archbishop Whately and his fellow-commissioners emphasized investment and public involvement. The contrast between this report and that of Senior and Chadwick on the Old Poor Law in England is remarkable. The English report of 1834, a paean to self-help and economy, had dwelt on (and exaggerated) the alleged evils of a system of public charity already in being. To the chagrin of ministers, the Irish report virtually ignored this message, and its findings were rejected by the British government as too radical. George Nicholls, one of the original English commissioners, was sent off to prepare a more palatable report, ignoring ‘the plans for the general improvement of Ireland contained in the report of the commissioners of inquiry’. Nicholls reported within six weeks, concluding that the English model would work in Ireland. This was acted on” (O’Grada 24).

hardly fastened round her body. Her rough short hair hung down upon her back, clotted with dirt, and the head and face of the child which she held was covered with dirt and sores. On no more wretched object, in its desolate solitude, did the eye of man ever fall. (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 406)

A sense of titillation accompanies the observation that the rags of clothing “barely suffice to cover her nakedness.” Indeed, the words “naked” or “nakedness” become a fixation, repeated seven times throughout the scene. Herbert’s role as the representative of imperial England is highlighted as he comes to “stand close over her,” but a sense of dramatic irony arises from the fact that, despite his towering presence, he acts ineffectually. The text acknowledges Herbert’s supposed superiority when it engenders the paragraph’s concluding sentence: “on no more wretched object ... did the eye of man ever fall.” Herbert’s eye, the discerning male eye, condescendingly looks down upon the wretched female sufferer. The sentence conveys the power disparities between male and female, English and Irish. Margaret Kelleher, drawing upon Laura Mulvey’s film criticism, argues that Herbert’s actions represent “woman as image, man as bearer of the look” (*Feminization* 22). As Herbert gazes at the starving family, the image reflects back his power and prosperity and their nakedness and misery.

One telling moment of free indirect discourse emphasizes that this dynamic is not necessarily unpleasant to Herbert. While wrapping his silk handkerchief around the child’s body, the narrator observes that “at first [Herbert] did not like to touch the small, naked, dwindled remains of humanity from which life had fled; but gradually he overcame his disgust, and kneeling down, he straightened the limbs and closed the eyes” (410). If Herbert did not “like to touch the small, naked, dwindled remains of humanity” at first, we are left to wonder what emotion he did feel after overcoming his disgust. Ultimately, Herbert’s gaze stands in for all of England and the Anglo-Irish. Transfixed by the horrid spectacle of a starving Irish peasantry, the English and Anglo-Irish guiltily gaze while acting ineffectually

and reveling in their relative comfort. In writing the cabin scene, Trollope simultaneously questions the narratives his novel proposes for understanding the Famine and explores the tensions present for any eyewitness of the disaster.

As Herbert arrives at Castle Desmond after witnessing starvation in the cabin, we step momentarily inside his mind. How, he wonders, should he:

... describe to the countess the scene he had just witnessed? Why describe it at all? That is what we should all say. He had come there to talk about other things – about other things which must be discussed, and which would require all his wits. Let him keep that poor woman on his mind, but not embarrass himself with any mention of her for the present. This, no doubt, would have been wise if only it had been possible; but out of the full heart the mouth speaks. (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 412)

How can we help but identify Trollope with Herbert in this passage? For an Englishman in Ireland, the only appropriate response to the human ramifications of the Famine is evasion. “Why describe it at all?” Herbert asks. “That is what we should all say,” the narrator anxiously amends. “Other things” – improving Irish agricultural practices, restructuring the landlord system, inculcating middle-class ideals – “must be discussed.” *Castle Richmond* struggles to avert its gaze from the Famine, lest the imperial project be tarnished by the traumatic images contained within. Let us not dally on Famine imagery, Trollope suggests, “but out of the full heart the mouth speaks.” That full heart, I contest, is Trollope’s traumatized sense of remorse, which conflicts with his ideological rendering of the Famine.

Castle Richmond offers one of the most intriguing studies into the psychological effects of imperialism. Invoking narratives of religion, progress, and race to defend English rule, Trollope nonetheless cannot legitimize those narratives in the face of human suffering. Trauma, according to Cathy Caruth:

Is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack

of integration into consciousness. Indeed, the literal registration of an event ... appears to be connected, in traumatic experience, precisely with the way it escapes full consciousness as it occurs. (152-3)

Just as a trauma refuses to be integrated into human “consciousness,” Famine images within *Castle Richmond* cannot be integrated into the narrative of imperialism. They act as isolated heteroglossic pockets of remorse. In other words, they embody Trollope’s repressed emotional response to a disaster he watched unfold. In his seminal *The Unofficial Trollope*, Bill Overton argues that, unlike the *Examiner* letters, “[*Castle Richmond*] presents not only the ideological view ... but also the human response;” he further suggests that “fiction released Trollope’s imaginative sympathy, which was inhibited by his official role” (23-4). This “imaginative sympathy” punctures *Castle Richmond*’s effort to contain the Famine through the “ideological view.” Bridget Matthews-Kane argues that the “human response” *Castle Richmond* elicits is essentially accidental: a byproduct of the novel’s form, the romance (128). I would amend that notion slightly. The response Trollope potentially elicits from his reader is a function of the novel’s form; the subversive voices unleashed by scenes of human suffering are a byproduct of Trollope’s trauma. Having strenuously defended the *laissez-faire* policies of the English government and castigated those who fictionalized the disaster in his *Examiner* letters, Trollope cannot help but convey a sense of tortured guilt as he focuses upon the human ramifications of the Famine. Politically, Trollope remains aligned with the narrator throughout the novel, but traumatic memories invade and continually complicate the ideology of *Castle Richmond*.

As the text concentrates on images of suffering, master-narratives fade in their ability to convey hope. Despite the fact that the vast majority of the novel does not deal with human repercussions of the Famine, the two short instances in which the narrative does – Bridget

Sheehy's request for alms and the cabin scene – are enough to shatter the ideology underlying each major master-narrative. Traumatic memory refuses to be assimilated; it attacks the methods of legitimization Trollope uses to comprehend the Famine.

Omniscience Undermined

Carleton's voice in *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, which I term the omniscient narrator, fails spectacularly in its quest for control over the novel's ideological interpretation. The second narrator strives for omniscience and clarity, but instead produces a cacophonous mess. In a poignant moment of insight, the supposedly omniscient narrator confides that it feels "as if that loud and multitudinous wail [of peasant misery] was still ringing in our ears, against which and the terrible recollections associated with it, we wish we could close them and the memory that brings them into fresh existence" (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:105). Despite his efforts, Carleton fails to block "terrible recollections" of the Famine from his mind. The haunting memories that continually spring "into fresh existence" are traumatic gaps, sabotaging his every effort to order the Famine. Images and textual manifestations of chaos reign supreme in *The Squanders of Castle Squander*. Structurally as well as ideologically, the novel resists notions of order and narratives of progress. The omniscient narrator fails the most basic test of omniscience: he cannot mold his world into a coherent narrative.

The Squanders of Castle Squander's non-linear, imploding structure mirrors traumatic memory. Unable to impose order onto the Famine, the narrative devolves into disarray. Cathy Caruth argues that the pathology of trauma consists "solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated ... but only [experienced] belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (4-5). Carleton's efforts to incorporate the Famine into an ideological interpretation attempt to harness its emotional power for political gain. In the ultimate irony of trauma literature, the author does not possess the trauma; trauma possesses him. Attempting to tame the disaster, Carleton inserts multiple narrators

into his novel and discards the plot, but his efforts repeatedly implode. The structure of *The Squanders of Castle Squander* is one haunted by trauma: the omniscient narrator continually circles back to address to the Famine. This disorienting repetition is a marker of the Famine's possession of Carleton. He can neither tear his mind free from images of suffering nor offer a reasonable explanation for the disaster. Trauma leaves Carleton in a cyclical narrative, focusing and refocusing upon the Famine endlessly, invoking statistic after statistic in the effort to contain its memory, but to no avail.

Just as the structure of *The Squanders of Castle Squander* embodies traumatic thought, Carleton's narrator rejects symbols of authority within nineteenth-century Ireland. The novel's chaotic structure is mirrored by its anarchic political leaning. Carleton targets narratives which, in his view, suppress the Irish peasantry: English domination, organized religion, and superstition. Industrialization and education, two methods of enhancing Irish self-sufficiency, are the only narratives of progress endorsed by the omniscient narrator. Drawing again upon Mikhail Bakhtin's work, I argue that *The Squanders of Castle Squander* represents a form of macro-political heteroglossia. In my analysis of *Castle Richmond*, I examine moments of micro-linguistic rebellion; here, I consider the effect of a narrator who attempts to possess the Famine through multiple modes of authority, but refuses to settle upon any of them as a consistent tactic.

In a novel, Bakhtin argues, we see the forces of linguistic multiplicity resist attempts to construct authority via a constructed "correct" language.¹⁵ His observation that "in any given historical moment of verbal-ideological life, each generation at each social level has its

¹⁵ Bakhtin and his context are inseparable. Writing *The Dialogic Imagination* while banished to the Soviet wilderness for his resistance to Communist authority, he encodes a subtle critique of human power relations into a theory of micro-linguistics. Thus, I contend, we may read his theories beyond their literal meaning, which focuses on linguistics within a novel.

own language” assumes an air of scholarly objectivity while enacting a quiet political rebellion (290). Though he never says so overtly, Bakhtin assumes that the official state language is not, and cannot possibly be, the language of the people. Every citizen possesses a distinct, irreducible “verbal-ideological” language. *The Dialogic Imagination* is thus polemic in its implications: heteroglossic moments in a novel are privileged over attempts to construct an authoritative language precisely *because* Bakhtin sees in heteroglossia an opportunity to resist Soviet power. He dismisses linguistic “correctness” as exclusionary attempts to arbitrarily create power divides; by extension and insinuation, he assaults political and interpersonal authority in the extra-textual world. Without a political dimension, Bakhtin’s theory is, in a sense, meaningless: people may possess differing idioms and modes of communication, but if we do nothing with that fact it remains merely an interesting fact.

Bakhtin’s approach to linguistics offers itself as a valuable mode of interpretation because of its emphasis on identifying subtle modes of constructing disparity. But when we consider the ideological ambitions of Bakhtin’s theories, we might also search for more overt manifestations of disempowerment. A purely Bakhtinian approach to *The Squanders of Castle Squander* may focus on the linguistic gaps between peasant and landlord while omitting the sundry other ways in which the novel rebels against exclusionary and authoritarian political visions. Instead, I focus upon the structural and thematic moments of overt ideological rebellion in Carleton’s novel, which provide a counterpoint to narratives of imperialism, religion, and progress. Writing his *Autobiography* in the last months of his life, Carleton claims that he “‘never entertained any ill feeling against the people on either side. ... ‘It is their accursed systems which [he] detest[s]’” (qtd. in Morash 161). *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, which rebels against every “accursed system” it can identify, enacts the

political dimension of Bakhtin's heteroglossia more overtly than does *Castle Richmond*. Systems of authority, the novel seems implicitly to argue, allowed the Famine to ravage Ireland; the omniscient narrator works to dismantle each of them in turn.

In working toward an expanded version of Bakhtin's thesis, I concentrate on his observations concerning authority-generating and authority-resisting trends in European thought. Bakhtin muses on what he labels the novel's "centrifugal" and "centripetal" tendencies (271-2). Centrifugal tendencies, on the one hand, act to consolidate power and create an "official" mode of thought; centripetal tendencies, on the other hand, disperse power to the masses, resisting any form of authoritarianism. The novel, Bakhtin claims, reflects "the struggle between two tendencies in the languages of European peoples: one a centralizing (unifying) tendency, the other a decentralizing tendency (that is, one that stratifies language)" (67). *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, I argue, revels in its role as a resistor of "centrifugal" tendencies. Dismantling many of the master-narratives constructed by Trollope's novel, the omniscient narrator emerges as a politically subversive voice working against accepted notions of imperialism, religion, and progress. This "centripetal" tendency does not, however, necessitate a complete loss of faith in master-narratives. I do not argue that just because Carleton's novel resists narratives of authority it automatically exhibits a general "incredulity towards master-narratives," which Jean-François Lyotard defines as "the post-modern" (xxiv). Instead, *The Squander of Castle Squander*'s distinctive structure and opposition to narratives of authority mark the novel as a dissident moment in the nineteenth century's attempt to overcome chaos with order. Resisting the structural deficiencies and inequalities of his home country by encoding a critique of colonialism and its ideological apparatus into his narrative, Carleton attempts to break any system that he believes oppresses Ireland.

From Carleton's perspective, Famine Ireland presented anything but a picture of enlightened progress. Frequently focusing upon depictions of encompassing misery, *The Squanders of Castle Squander* seems to revel in rebuking the notion of a civilization progressing steadily forward. Its narrative confusion – in which chronology breaks down, extra-textual voices usurp both narrators', the plot disappears, and Carleton addresses the reader directly – represent a counterpoint to Anthony Trollope's comparatively linear novel of progress. Carleton uses his omniscient narrator to comment upon literary conventions:

We have often wondered why there is so much villainy in life; and the consideration of it is a serious and painful speculation; one, indeed, which can never be resolved during our present existence. Authors, both of prose and poetry, feel themselves bound by a rule of literary justice, always to punish villainy in their works. This is all very good but in doing so they depart from those practical examples of life which occur in nineteen cases out of twenty. (*Squanders* 2:166)

As Carleton muses upon the “villainy in life,” he condemns notions of “literary justice.” He almost directly informs the reader that he will not alter reality to fit a narrative of progress; chaos, he seems to argue, better represents Ireland's current state. As landlords hire men to demolish the tenant-houses so that starving, evicted paupers will not use them as shelter, Carleton bitterly remarks that “they ... made such strides in the progress of *civilization*,” (2:104). If the march towards “civilization” comes at the cost of such immense human suffering, the novel's moral compass rejects narratives of progress.

This rejection is embedded in *The Squanders of Castle Squander*'s structure. Circling continually back upon images of the Famine, the novel embodies what Christopher Herbert, in the context of Indian Mutiny literature, labels the “compulsive imaginary reliving of unbearable experience that defines the specificity of trauma” (54). Carleton's narrative method, which features an imploding plot and competing narrators, may thus be seen as a

manifestation of the “compulsive imaginary reliving of unbearable experience.” The omniscient narrator continually folds in upon itself, offering inadequate explanation after inadequate explanation for the Famine. Carleton’s proliferating interpretations expose that all efforts to contain the Famine within an ideological narrative simplify chaos. That he cannot settle upon one framework demonstrates the reductiveness of partisan frameworks in the face of traumatic memory.

Beyond Carleton’s narrative fractures, his traumatized rejection of normative constructions of the realist novel further buttresses his attack on the governing classes which permit such a calamity. Amid a forty-one page tirade by Carleton’s omniscient narrator, the concluding chapter dedicates a scant three small paragraphs to the fate of the Squanders, making no pretense to conclude their story neatly.¹⁶ Humbled by his family’s mismanagement of the estate, Dick Squander begins collecting poor-rates. Immediately after the two paragraphs devoted to his story, we learn that:

Our narrative is nearly closed. Emily, a few months ago, was married to her cousin; and I am aware, from private information, that her father-in-law intends to bid for the Castle, demesne, and a considerable portion of the property, in order to replace them in the family. (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:276)

Quickly after this inadequate closure, the omniscient narrator interrupts to claim “it remains that we should say a few words upon the present state and prospects of the country” (2:277). The Squanders are never mentioned again, while the omniscient narrator’s “few words” fill the remaining thirty four pages of the book. Carleton’s novel takes a deeply political stance as it denies their narrative its satisfying conclusion. Their story, the novel seems to suggest,

¹⁶ The final tirade, which resembles many others throughout *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, covers topics as diverse as the Encumbered Estates Acts of 1848 and 1849; patterns of emigration during the Famine; the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848; Daniel O’Connell and the Repeal Movement; John Mitchell’s political legacy; Pío Nono (Pope Pious IX) and his faults; the inappropriate politicization of the clergy in Ireland; an argument for education reform, replete with proposed curricula; the industrialization of the Irish economy; and George Washington’s legacy as a symbol of courageous resistance to colonial misrule.

is antiquated and irrelevant; peasants' suffering assumes primary significance in the non-linear novel of anti-progress and anti-authority.

Narrative moments offering both hope and clarity come few and far between in *The Squanders of Castle Squanders*. Generally – and especially in the second half of the novel – they occur when the omniscient narrator argues for institutions that would strengthen Ireland, such as an industrialized economy or improved education system. In one of the few moments in which the English emerge as an imitable force in the novel, Carleton spends much of the novel's final section lavishing "praise on many of Victorian Ireland's most prominent images of progress, including Lord George Bentick's Railway Bill and the Great Exhibition of 1851, while condemning superstition and fetishization of the past" (Morash 161). The past, with its "supersition and fetishization," leads to an indefinite tutelage under the English. Imitating their accomplishments, Carleton seems to argue, will allow Ireland to become self-sufficient. The omniscient narrator makes this connection explicit as he argues that "We are anxious for the welfare, for the improvement, for the education, for the independence, of the Irish people, and do not wish to see them the slaves either of the landlord or the priest, although, unfortunately for their own happiness, they are too much the slaves of both" (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:234). Education and industrialization are among the only forms of progress Carleton promotes rather than attacks. These moments of hope in the face of Famine should generally be understood as outliers within Carleton's text. For the vast majority of his narrator's rants, institutions related to authority, such as imperialism or religion, are castigated for their complicity in Irish degradation and Famine.

Authority generating narratives which relate to the imperial endeavor are not the only modes of authority which Carleton attacks throughout the novel. The omniscient narrator

exerts much of his energy castigating the superstitions surrounding the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and its clergy. Interrupting the narrative for a prolonged tirade against Catholicism, the omniscient narrator provides three anecdotes of a peasantry suffering under superstitions tacitly sanctioned by the Irish clergy. In the first, a “gigantic monster who had committed six murders” commits suicide despite the fact that he has “the figure of a crucifix tattooed into his huge breast, with St. Patrick on one side, and the Blessed Virgin on the other!” (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:176). In the second, a gang of murderers, who are in the process of pillaging the house of their most recent victim, realize midnight has passed, Friday has begun, and they cannot eat the meat in the kitchen (2:178). Finally, Carleton quotes at length the *Galway Vindicator* in its description of a fishing town in which the fisherman refuse to harvest an abundant source of herrings during the Famine because their priests forbade their doing so (2:179-80). In justifying its inclusion of the *Vindicator* story, the omniscient narrator claims that he will “illustrate the view we take of those ignorant notions which so completely obstruct Irish industry and progress” (2:179). At the conclusion of the anecdotes, he says, “without hesitation, that the publication of the truth contained in that paragraph – for it *is* truth, and a *well-known truth* – is not only a disgrace to [the Catholic clergy] but to the country at large” (2:180). Again attesting to his interpretation’s truthfulness, Carleton attacks one of the primary extra-imperial modes of generating authority in nineteenth-century Ireland: the Catholic Church.

Not content to merely assault the practices of the Catholic Church, Carleton also questions God Himself, who the narrator of *Castle Richmond* invokes to rationalize his reading of the Famine. Commenting on the devastating effects of the Famine throughout Ireland, the omniscient narrator claims that a “terrific scourge” has been visited upon Ireland:

It was as if some strong man should strike down another in the very moment of his weakness, when he is utterly incapable of self-protection and defense. We mean that the analogy holds good only in the external act; for we dare not question the justice of Almighty Providence, who, for reasons with which we can never become acquainted, visited our people with such a transcendent infliction: not the people alone, however, but those at whose hands they experienced so little consideration and sympathy. (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:111-2)

Though the omniscient narrator does claim that he “dare not question the justice of Almighty Providence,” the passage seems to use that disclaimer to mask a veiled accusation. Any “strong man” who would “strike down another in the very moment of his weakness” seems incompatible with the Christian notion of a merciful God. Yet, what “strong man” other than God could possibly bring a “transcendent infliction” on the scale of the Famine? Further, Christianity – with its focus on the elevation of the poor and miserable – appears an ill venue for the decimation of the people who “experienced so little consideration and sympathy.” Lurking underneath the passage’s diction is a radical refutation of Trollope’s most persuasive narrative of progress: God’s mercy.

Less philosophical and more affecting is the most horrifying moment of *The Squanders of Castle Squander*. In one of the main plot’s last insets, Randy and Mrs. Squander travel to Mr. Squander’s grave at the height of the Famine. The omniscient narrator disappears for several pages in order to allow the narrative to convey the Famine’s gruesomeness. Randy’s depiction of a Famine-era graveyard conveys the persistence with which the novel focuses upon dehumanizing effects of the Famine:

Three or four small and wretched-looking parties – some consisting of a dozen, and others of not more than half-a-dozen each – were engaged in huddling into the earth the miserable shells of coffins, burying them at a depth of not more than ten or twelve inches in the ground; and one horrific remnant of humanity, whose nearly black features retained the frightful and spasmodic contortions of cholera, was in the act of being thrown, coffinless and half-naked, into what was rather a shallow trench, than a grave! Round about, and

in this awful cemetery, were numbers of gaunt and starving dogs, whose skeleton bodies and fearful howlings indicated the ravenous fury with which they awaited an opportunity to drag the unfortunate dead from their shallow graves, and glut themselves upon their bodies. Here and there an arm; in another place a head (half-eaten by some famished mongrel, who had been frightened from his prey), or a leg, dragged partially from the earth, and half-mangled, might be seen. ... But this was not all. Legs and arms stripped of the flesh and bearing about them the unnatural marks left by the bloody fangs of some hungry mastiff, were scattered about. ... In a different field might be seen another wolfish hound, with a human head between his paws, on the features of which he was making his meal. (Carleton, *Squanders* 2:138-9)

Terror pervades each word as Carleton depicts “gaunt and starving dogs” consuming the “[remnants] of humanity.” Just as Trollope appears fixated on visual elements of starvation in *Castle Richmond*’s cabin scene, Carleton focuses luridly on his novel’s most focused depiction of horror. Disembodied limbs litter the graveyard while a “wolfish hound, with a human head between his paws” makes his meal. Formerly domestic dogs glutting “themselves upon [human] bodies” evoke the most garish of nightmares. It is the nightmare of trauma, incessantly repeating in Carleton’s mind. Immediately after this harrowing depiction, Carleton’s narrator assures the reader in italics that “*all these frightful pictures were facts of that day, and were witnessed by thousands!*” (2:139).¹⁷ Coupling the revolting description with one of the novel’s characteristic claims to represent the reality of the Famine shifts the account from the (relatively) comfortable world of fiction to the uneasy realm of human atrocity. Carleton attempts to bring us into his tortured mind, forcing us to vicariously experience the trauma of the Famine and question the narratives of progress and civilization.

¹⁷ There were reports of dogs feasting upon human corpses during the Famine, particularly on the west coast. Asenath Nicholson, for instance, kept a diary of her initial experiences in Ireland (she arrived at the outset of the Famine). Upon arriving at an island where the dogs were fat and the people dying, she remembers asking her guide, “How can the dogs look so fat and shining here, where there is no food for the people?” “Shall I tell her?” said the pilot to Mr. Griffith, not supposing that I had heard him. This was enough: if anything were wanting to make the horrors of the Famine complete, this supplied the deficiency. Reader, I leave you to your thoughts” (Nicholson 301).

The Squanders of Castle Squander is a stunning failure to incorporate the Famine into “a completed story of the past” (Caruth 153). Carleton’s omniscient narrator cannot help but return to the disaster and lament with increasing helplessness its impact. Every effort to free the narrative by attacking the authority structures which failed to prevent the disaster fall inert, leaving Carleton no option but to try again from a slightly different angle. He cannot contain the Famine, so it consumes his novel. The Famine retains a firm grip on the present, possessing Carleton and his work.

“How feeble and inexpressive is the word!”¹⁸

After detailing the miseries of tenant eviction, starvation, and exploitation, after narrating tales of children eaten by their parents, after bemoaning women impregnated and abandoned by their landlords, William Carleton pauses to observe: “It was pitiful! Alas! How feeble and inexpressive is the word!” (*Squanders* 2:105). No one word or utterance can contain the Famine, so voices proliferate wildly throughout *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, all attempting to find the interpretative framework, the phrase, or the group of words that will finally possess it. Every effort fails because traumatic memory resists incorporation into narrative.

Anthony Trollope, whose narrator so desperately attempts to contain the Famine within master-narratives, also questions the power of language to convey suffering. As Herbert gazes ineffectually on the starving family in the cabin, every character remains nearly wordless. After exposing the naked child’s corpse, Herbert says “nothing – hardly, indeed, knowing how to speak, and looking from the corpse back to the woman, as though he expected that she would say something unasked. But she did not say a word, though she so turned her head that her eyes rested on him” (Trollope, *Castle Richmond* 408). Minutes later, the mother absently gazes at Herbert, “shaking her head slowly, as though asking him with all the voice that was left to her, whether it were not piteous; but of words she still uttered none” (410). Their extra-linguistic communication symbolizes Trollope’s traumatized reaction to the Famine: subtle panic for Herbert the Englishman, resignation for the nearly expired Irish mother. The psychological ramifications of this disaster are to be felt, not narrated.

¹⁸ Carleton, *The Squanders of Castle Squander* 2:105.

Language fails in the face of trauma for eyewitness authors writing about the Famine. Not only is narrative subverted, but even the most basic building blocks of an ideological narrative – words – are exposed as woefully inadequate. Terry Eagleton, whose *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* remains the most influential literary analysis related to the Famine, famously claims that the disaster represents the “threatened death of the signifier” (11). Despite the fact that he deals primarily with moments of “repression or evasion” in the post-Famine Irish canon, Eagleton accurately conveys the effect of the disaster on its first-generation fiction (12).¹⁹ Again and again, novelists such as Carleton and Trollope return to a refrain that unifies Famine fiction: the written word is too feeble a vessel to convey the extent of human suffering.²⁰ Neither Carleton nor Trollope will possess the Famine through writing; it will continue to possess them.

In thus denying the power of language to contain trauma, Famine literature undermines its own endeavor: narrative is exposed as an insufficient representation of reality, unfit to convey partisan interpretations of the disaster. Stripped of its ability to confer meaning onto images of suffering, narrative can no longer legitimately claim to generate stories that simplify human experience into an interpretive framework. Ideology may thus be said to simultaneously enable and disable Famine fiction. On the one hand, it provides Trollope and Carleton with interpretive strategies for containing their trauma, which are embedded in the structure and content of *Castle Richmond* and *The Squanders of Castle*

¹⁹ Among much philosophical-historical interpretation, Eagleton's study focuses upon *Wuthering Heights*, Edmund Burke's and Francis Hutcheson's philosophies, and the fiction of Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, and James Joyce.

²⁰ Margaret Kelleher resists this interpretation. Instead, she argues, “the extent of such a silence or repression in the Irish literary tradition runs the risk of being overstated. As Sean Ryder persuasively argues in his work on the Nation poets, references to the impossibility of communication were frequently a rhetorical tool. Even the powerful and eloquent disclaimers given by an eyewitness such as William Bennet are always succeeded by an attempt at representation, the prefacing remarks thus serving to heighten and focus a reader's interest.” (*Feminization* 4).

Squander. On the other, whenever their narratives approach those scenes of trauma Trollope and Carleton struggle to possess, ideological explanations implode, creating dissonance between the images depicted and the novel's official interpretation. Traumatic memory represents the ultimate counterpoint to and refutation of ideological narrative: it is entirely personal, irreducible, incommunicable, and uncontainable.

Appendix

On our arrival home, we found Dick and Harry in a pitiable state. But, good heavens, what a contrast between the country we had left [Northern Ireland] and that to which we had returned. A vast deal of the best practical of knowledge of life is the result of comparison and example; a principle well understood by Prince Albert, when he conceived one of the most magnificent projects, and the most stimulative to the peace, industry, and enterprise of man, that ever the world witnessed. For instance, until I had an opportunity of seeing the comfort, the industry, the sobriety, and energy of the North, I was not perfectly aware of the miserable condition, the ignorance, and neglected habits of the South and West. The hordes of naked beggars, clamorous and importunate, the vile cultivation, the filthy houses, the sinks and dung-heaps that oppressed you with their stench, the destructive hot-beds of contagion, the indifference of the people to personal and domestic cleanliness, all this, and far more than this, made me wonder that I had never been so strongly and disagreeably impressed with it before. I had not, however, *then* seen the North.

When it was known that Emily was no longer at the Castle, those neighbors who had lent them furniture sent for it, and now, with the exception of Dr. M'Claret's things, the house was an empty wreck. We lived, however, as well as we could. The whiskey, instead of coming into the house, as formerly, in puncheons, was now purchased by the gallon; but quite as frequently by the quart, and wine was out of the question. In this way we struggled on for about a month, at the expiration of which time Harry made a lucky hit at a steeple-chase, which brought him in about three hundred pounds. It was done by some of those maneuvers so common on the turf; for I saw him grin on his return home, and heard him boast of what he termed the *dead knowledge*, by which he accomplished it. He rode a celebrated horse, on whom a great deal of money depended, but he suffered himself to be thrown once or twice in every heat, and I have reason to suspect, in consequence of an indignant observation which once dropped from Dick, that by this means he lost the race designedly.

We must now direct the attention of our readers to one of the most fearful and appalling pictures of national calamity and horror that ever the eye of man rested on, or the heart of man conceived. The calamity we allude to was a three-headed monster, which in this shape became the *Apollyon* or destroyer of at least a million and a quarter of people. The first head was Extermination by the landlords, the second, Famine, and the third, Pestilence; all working together and decimating the wretched population by a combined and uniform destruction. These three causes reacted upon each other with a most deadly and destructive reciprocity. We question if there is anything in the historical records of civilized life so utterly heartless and inhuman as the system of extermination or eviction, which spread such wide and helpless desolation over the country.

The process was as follows: - the Landlord, armed by legal authority, procured a *posse* of bailiffs and assistants, slavish ruffians, without heart or feeling, who went in a body to the house or cabin that was laid down in their murderous schedule. This vile crew proceeded to the humble residences of those devoted families by order of the landlord or agent, who sometimes were themselves present, but not often. Be it remembered now, that these evictions were in their most multitudinous and fearful operation during the four years of famine, cholera, fever, and dysentery, and that the unhappy class against whom they were directed was that which, from its poverty and destitution, was most liable to contagion and

disease. The landlord, by evicting those creatures, threw them without support upon the world, without house or home or shelter of any kind, unless a naked shed of branches run up under the shelter of some ditch. These people, if not already laboring under contagious disease, were, from the destitution to which they had been driven, soon seized with it. Under these circumstances, their unhappy position gave them a claim upon the poor-houses; the rates consequently became heavy; but the failure of the potato crops and the general misery rendered it impossible for the farmers to pay them. That is to say, the rates increased most rapidly when the means of meeting them were down to zero.

In such an awful state of things, when the country was literally steaming with contagion, the poor-houses were crowded with people who introduced fever, dysentery, and cholera into them, until it was impossible to separate the healthy from the sick; and under these circumstances did the terrible drama of civil murder, in the shape of extermination, proceed with frightful strides.

Now, the landlords forgot that by throwing these unfortunate people upon the poor-rates, they were heaping the burthen of their support onto themselves and their property. The people were unable to pay the rates; and we have heard that from the heaviness of their amount, many landlords in Connaught abandoned their property altogether, finding it unable to meet the rates alone, rent being out of the question.

Thus, we say, did it happen that extermination, and disease, and famine, produced and reproduced each other, until the country became one wide-spread grave-yard – in too many instances unsanctified, unconsecrated.

... [I omit a lengthy description of workhouse conditions]

We alluded, in a previous part of this work, to an extermination which took place in Galway, and which excited considerable attention in the House of Commons; and we stated at the same time that the facts and circumstances connected with it resembled in a surprising manner a description of such an event which we had written some years before. We must subjoin that description from “Valentine M’Clutchy, the Irish Agent,” because we know that it may stand in for a general diorama of what has taken place within the last six or eight years, when extermination became the habit of the country.

[A fifteen page extract from *Valentine M’Clutchy* follows].

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